Project: Promoting Democracy and an Equitable Society

Project Series: Xenophobia

Social Media Analytics Report 6

01 January - 05 November 2023
Release date: 27 November 2023

Funded by
the European Union

Table of Contents

1. Findings Summary

- This data indicates a significant increase in conversation volume and an expanding number of participants suggesting growing interest in the topic. (Section [5]).
- The volume of mentions throughout 2023 until 05 November varied between 50 000 and 75 000 per week. ([5])
- The top five hashtags for the conversation are #khositwala, #operationdudula, #putsouthaficansfirst (spelt without an 'r'), #zimbabwe and #putsouthafricansfirst. ([6])
- The main topics of discussion are focused on South Africa, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. Both Nigeria and Zimbabwe held significant elections in 2023, which appears in the subthemes. ([7])
- This research involved conducting a category analysis, where the categories analysed in this section include 'police', 'home affairs', 'media', and 'civil society'. These categories collectively account for 13% of the overall conversation. ([8])
- When analysing the mention volume based on different categories, it is observed that media receives the highest mention volume among all categories. It is then followed by home affairs, police, and civil society. ([8])
- The media category produces the highest amount of original content, closely followed by the civil society category. It is noteworthy to observe the significant retweeting activity of content related to Home Affairs and the Police. ([9])
- A range of micro narratives per category were identified. These micro narratives, when repeated frequently, move from the fringes of the conversation into being narratives that are accepted within mainstream conversation. ([14])

2. Introduction

The "Promoting Human Rights, Democracy, and Equity" report series is funded by the European Union (EU) as part of the CABC programme focusing on xenophobia. It offers regular analysis of troubling narratives and divisive content relating to xenophobia on South African social media, specifically Twitter/X. This report, the sixth in the series, examines micro narratives that form part of the online conversation about immigrants living in South Africa. In particular, it tracks micro narratives associated with the Department of Home Affairs and the South African Police Services. In addition, it examines micro narratives about the role of Non-Government Organisations and the media. The rationale behind doing so is that these roleplayers are frequently interfacing at the frontline of societal challenges that feature in xenophobic conversations.

3. Background

The Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (CABC) has monitored online content and disinformation campaigns that promote xenophobia since 2020 when the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change discovered and intervened against an online network that amplified

anti-immigrant sentiment in South Africa. In June 2022, CABC published a [Lay of the Land](#) report, providing an overview of xenophobic micro-narratives in South Africa. In the first quarter of 2023, CABC initiated the "Promoting Human Rights, Democracy, and Equity" report series with the aim of reducing hate speech and discrimination against women, migrants, and minorities.

The first of the reports in the series, [Xenophobia Social Media Analytics: Report 1](#) was released in March 2023, analysing the behavioural drivers behind xenophobia. The report shows that over 80% of mentions in the conversation express negative sentiments toward immigrants living in South Africa, based on crowd-verified data[1]. The analysis revealed that accounts in the South African conversation about immigrants in the country often blame immigrants for socio-economic problems and government service delivery failures.

Building on this foundation, [Report 2](#) was released in May 2023, with a specific focus on the political mobilisation of anti-immigrant online conversations. Key hashtags within these conversations included #operationdudula, #putsouthaficansfirst (note the absence of the letter 'r' in "africans"), and #putsouthafricansfirst. Of particular concern was the expanding reach of Operation Dudula and the erroneous attribution of various violent crimes to immigrants, despite a lack of concrete evidence. The report also identified certain influential accounts exhibiting behaviours that suggested an intention to manipulate the ongoing conversation.

In [Report 3](#), released in July 2023, the CABC categorised key individuals and organisations involved in the online conversation about immigrants in South Africa. The research revealed that those with predominantly negative views were more active on social media, posting more frequently and attracting more public interaction. The report also highlighted Operation Dudula and Gayton McKenzie as influential in xenophobic discourse, often with exaggerated viewpoints. Additionally, it found connections between these figures and a coordinated network responsible for establishing the "Put South Africans First" movement in 2020.

[Report 4](#) focussed on an analysis of key hashtags and content themes, aimed at investigating the potential for coordinated campaigns. Nimmo's Coefficient of Traffic Manipulation was used to assess ten specific hashtags, determining whether they were being employed in manipulated conversations not authentically driven by South Africans and to determine the role of these hashtags in propagating anti-immigrant sentiments. Additionally, this report included a network map highlighting influential authors to provide further clarity on prominent individuals in this conversation.

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[1] Crowd verified data is a feature available through the BrandsEye platform that sources thousands of people to classify content by sentiment or other predefined categories.

In October 2023, [report 5](#) was published with an analysis of social media trends of xenophobia and anti-immigrant narratives in South Africa from July to September 2023. Public figures, particularly politicians, continued to impact significantly on the conversation. There were ongoing debates about the deportation of illegal immigrants, with some advocating for mass deportations. During this period, a key event that occurred was a devastating building fire in Marshalltown, Johannesburg.

An additional report that was released in October 2023 is [The Beyond Borders report](#) which provides a three-year overview of xenophobia in South Africa. It reveals that proponents of the anti-immigrant narrative in South Africa use tactics like mis- and disinformation, exaggerated statistics, and scapegoating to sustain xenophobia online. Certain political parties are also employing these tactics to gain support for upcoming elections. Immigrants are often scapegoated for issues like unemployment and crime, fueled by disinformation campaigns. Similar to the "Make America Great Again" campaign, patriotism is invoked to support these narratives. This trend is expected to continue leading up to the 2024 South African elections.

4.   Research Methodology

The data for this report was collected using a social media analytics tool. Initial keywords were selected through a qualitative process, combining existing knowledge, desk research, a literature review, and social media analysis. These keywords were further refined through manual checks. A social media analytics tool was utilised to track discussions about xenophobia in South Africa. This social media analytics tool collects data and enables analysis from various sources, with Twitter (now known as X) being the primary platform. Many South African politicians are active users of X, and media organisations heavily rely on the platform. As a result, important public discussions can quickly shift between traditional media and social media channels like X. Additional sources include websites such as blogs, digital media publications, and forums. The date range of 01 January to 05 November 2023 was selected for the analysis because it includes an in-depth analysis of four different categories - 'police', 'home affairs', 'media', and 'civil society' that have not previously been isolated in the dataset. The category analysis was set up by compiling keywords for each category so that this content could be identified as a subset of the overall conversation.

5.   Conversation volume

As shown in Figure 1, during the period of 01 January to 05 November 2023, the conversation volume online about immigrants in South Africa entailed 2 930 184 mentions. Mention volume is a metric that measures the number of times that online content containing the keyword terms in the search query was posted to or from a social media channel. Examples of a mention include a tweet, a phrase in a news article or a comment on a YouTube video. The mention volume increased by 62% when compared to the previous period of the same duration. These mentions

were posted by 195 444 unique authors. The number of unique authors increased (by 19%) when compared to the previous period. This shows that the conversation volume has grown quite significantly and the number of people who are participating in the conversation has also grown. During the course of the approximately ten-month period, accounts have posted an average of 15 mentions containing the keywords on the topic of immigrants in South Africa.

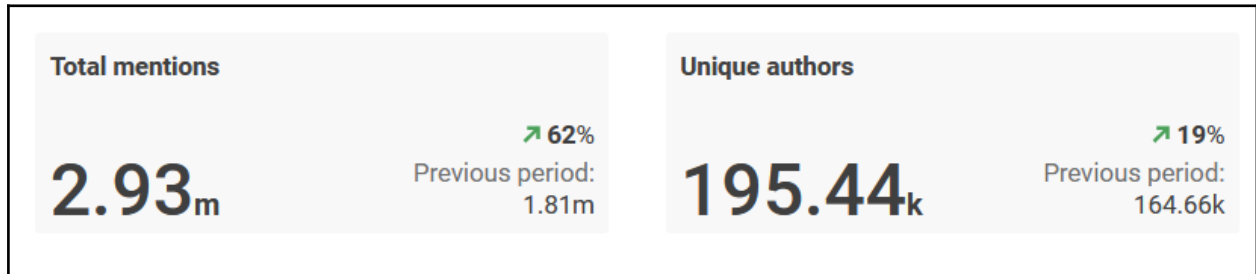| Total mentions		Unique authors	
	↗ 62%		↗ 19%
2.93m	Previous period: 1.81m	**195.44**k	Previous period: 164.66k

Figure 1: Volume metrics for 01 January to 05 November 2023

The mention volume over time during the course of 2023 tended to be in the range of 50 000 to 75 000 mentions per week (see Figure 2). There were however some notable peaks in mention volume where it exceeded 100 000. The biggest peak occurred from 20 to 26 March 2023. At point A in Figure 2 below, the mention volume was 111 288, which was **76%** higher than usual, driven mostly by:

- 10860 mentions using the hashtag #nationalshutdown
- 3229 mentions using the hashtag #goldmafia
- 2769 mentions using the hashtag #nhlanhlalux
- 2620 mentions using the hashtag #aljazeeradocumentary
- 2019 mentions using the hashtag #ramaphosamustgo

The second-biggest peak spanned 21 August to 3 September 2023. At point B in Figure 2, the mention volume reached 99 413. Here, the mention volume was **57%** higher than usual, driven by:

- 3320 mentions using the hashtag #zimdecides2023
- 2514 mentions using the hashtag #zimbabweelections2023
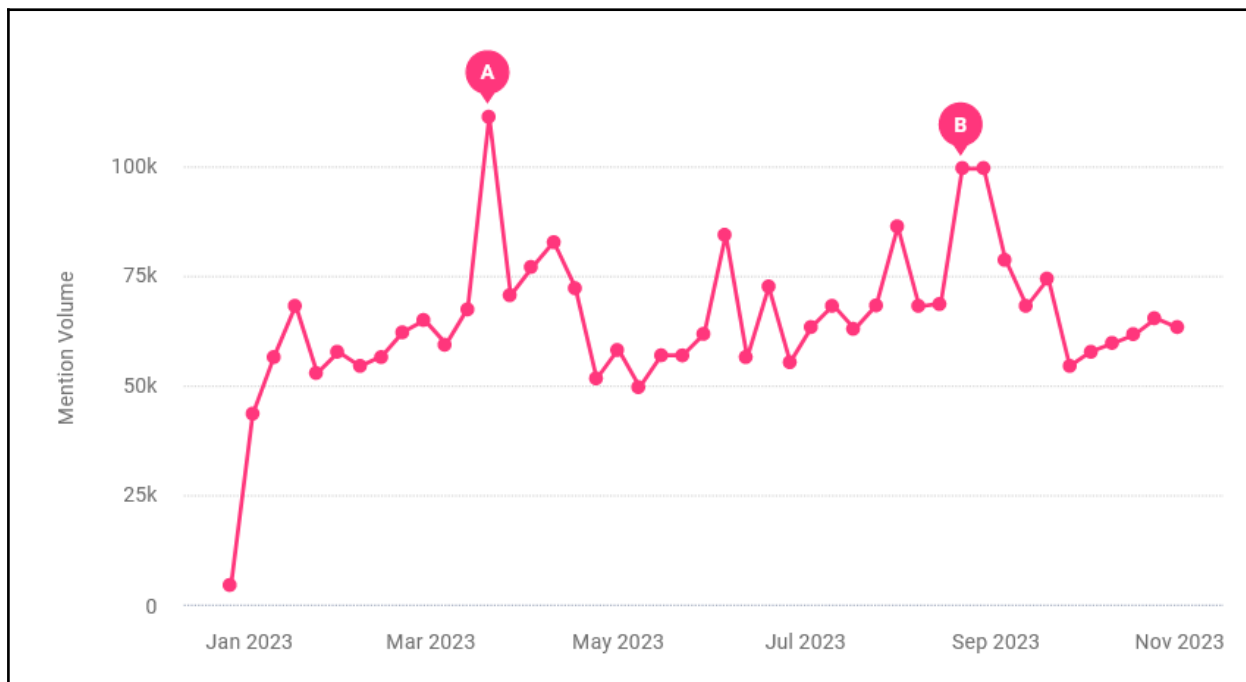- 2687 mentions using the hashtag #zimbabwe

Figure 2: Weekly mention volume over time for 01 January to 05 November 2023

What is notable about the hashtags driving the peaks is the extent to which they relate to politics - specifically an anti-Ramaphosa narrative and content about the Zimbabwean elections.

The hashtag #NationalShutdown refers to a protest that was led by the EFF and took place on 20 March 2023. The national shutdown entailed protesting the electricity crisis, demanding President Cyril Ramaphosa's resignation and action on unemployment. Stealing some of the limelight associated with the hashtag, Nhlanhla Lux, a former spokesperson of Operation Dudula, tweeted about his house in Soweto being bombed. The tweet read in a manner implying that it resulted in the death of his entire family. Various mentions relate to EFF leader Julius Malema's response to the bombing of Nhlanhla Lux's house and his alleged involvement in the incident. The police investigation of the alleged bombing and their statements about the incident are discussed in multiple headlines. Some headlines express criticism towards the EFF party and the government, highlighting issues such as the failure of the #NationalShutdown and ongoing problems in the country.

Gold Mafia, a four-part Al Jazeera documentary is mentioned frequently (see here, here, here and here). In this groundbreaking investigative series, Al Jazeera reporters expose Africa's Gold Mafia. They infiltrated criminal gangs involved in a billion-dollar black money operation, revealing the role of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe as Southern Africa's biggest laundromat. The investigation reached the highest offices of several countries including Zimbabwe's Presidency and uncovered how the conversion of dirty cash into gold for worldwide sale works (Al Jazeera, 2023). South African linkages were also revealed.

6.   Conversation trends

This section unpacks trends in the conversation. It uses word clouds generated with a social media listening tool. The relative sizes of the word or symbol represents the extent of the mention volume. The bigger the size of the word, the more times it has been mentioned in the conversation.

The top 20 hashtags in the conversation overall are shown in Figure 3 below. The top five hashtags are:

1. #khositwala with 48 192 mentions
2. #operationdudula with 44 944 mentions
3. #putsouthaficansfirst with 25 427 mentions (note that Africans is spelt without an 'r')
4. #zimbabwe with 23 750 mentions
5. #putsouthafricansfirst with 19 610 mentions

Figure 3: Top hashtags for the period 01 January to 05 November 2023

Khosi Twala is the winner of the TV show, Big Brother Titans. The presence of that hashtag is due to the keywords that are used. The popular TV show did not drive xenophobic narratives. Occasionally, accounts on social media that drive xenophobic narratives have used the hashtag to spread hateful micro-narratives in what is called hashjacking[2]. The presence of this hashtag in the conversation is a misnomer, but due to hashjacking we have not excluded it from the keyword query. In line with previous reports in this series #operationdudula and the variations #putsouthaficansfirst and #putsouthafricansfirst were the most prominent hashtags in the conversation. There is also a trend of #zimbabwe appearing in the top hashtags. Nigeria-related hashtags also tend to appear in the conversation. The nature of the xenophobic narratives in the conversation is typically Afrophobic and anti-Asian - focusing on spreading the idea that nationals from Africa and Asia are 'undesirable persons' to have in the country, with the

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[2] Hashjacking refers to diverting attention from the conversation by using a hashtag for purposes other than the original intention. It has the effect of interrupting someone else's chat. (Oxford Reference, 2023)

reasoning that they are committing crimes, taking jobs that South Africans should be doing and overburdening public services.

The most prominent locations, phrases and keywords in the conversation are depicted in Figure 4. Locations gained the most mention volume with Africa and South Africa getting the greatest mention volume out of these content types. Additional locations in the word cloud are US, China and Johannesburg. People, country, president and government are keywords that garnered a high mention volume during the reporting period. South Africans, illegal immigrants and illegal foreigners are the top phrases. An examination of the mentions that make up these top locations, phrases and keywords indicate that this conversation is broader than being solely about South Africa's domestic politics. It encompasses global political economy considerations and entails discourse on post colonial realities in African countries. This includes countries that are navigating elections and political contestation.
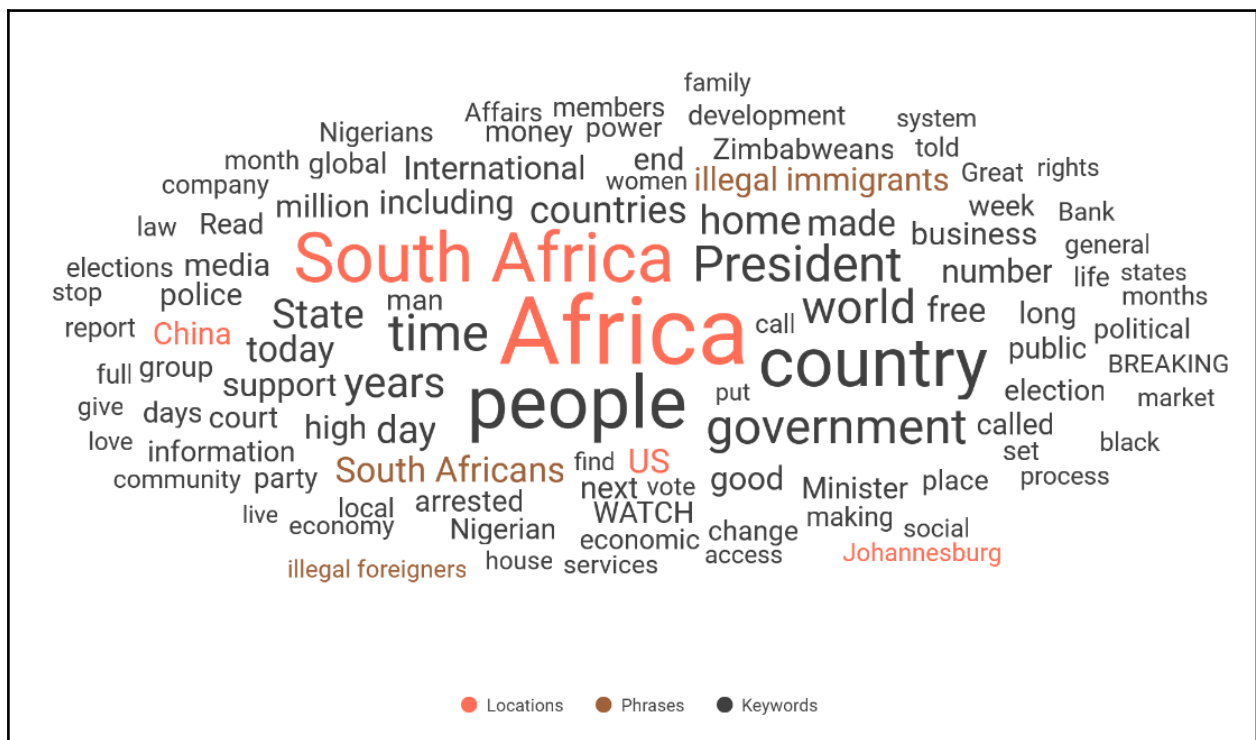

Figure 4: Top locations, phrases and keywords

The top emojis in the conversation are shown in Figure 5 below. Emojis for laughing and crying are the most prominent. The largest flag (meaning it had the greatest mention volume) is the Nigerian flag, followed by the South African and Zimbabwean flags. The American, Russian, Chinese, Ghanaian and Mozambique flags also appear in the conversation. The fire emoji is used to indicate when something is 'lit' (meaning that it is on fire / exciting / excellent). Sometimes the fire emoji appears with incendiary content that encourages vigilante acts. Emojis play a role in establishing normative ideas in a conversation. For example, using the green tick often signifies agreement with a xenophobic narrative. The trash can emoji is used to signify disgust and frequently appears in mentions where there is hate speech about foreign nationals or repression of the media or civil society. See example tweets/X's here and here.
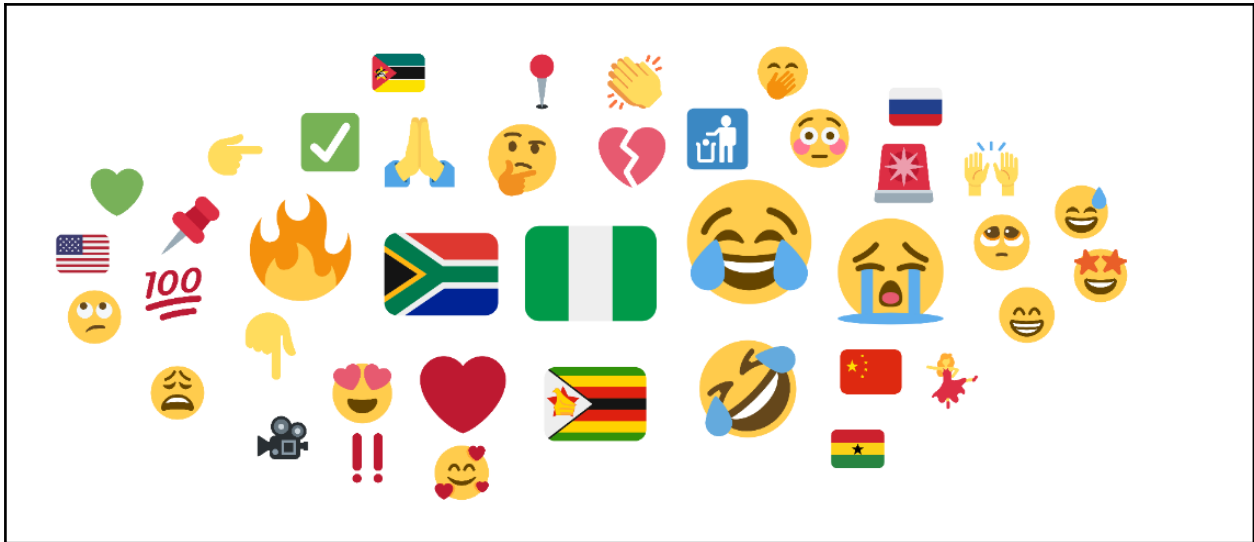
Figure 5: Top emojis

7. Themes

The topics wheel in Figure 6 below shows the main themes (in the inner ring) and subthemes (in the outer ring). The three main themes are (1) South Africa / South Africans / Country, (2) Nigeria and (3) Zimbabwe. It is noteworthy that both Nigeria and Zimbabwe have had elections during 2023 and this features in the subthemes.

Several headlines refer to the presence of 'illegal foreigners' and the alleged crimes they commit in South Africa. This includes incidents such as arrests of illegal immigrants, their alleged involvement in hijackings, and their association with alleged acts of terrorism. A range of instances of disinformation related to crimes said to be committed by immigrants have been detected in the conversation.

Some headlines focus on the issue of undocumented foreign nationals entering South Africa. This includes instances where fake doctors or illegal immigrants posing as asylum seekers are discovered.

A few headlines mention the interception or arrest of illegal immigrants from other countries, such as Ethiopia and Pakistan. This suggests a concern about cross-border immigration and collaboration among countries to address this issue.

One headline implies that some government officials are involved in registering NGOs in their relatives' names and hijacking buildings, blaming these actions on illegal immigrants instead.
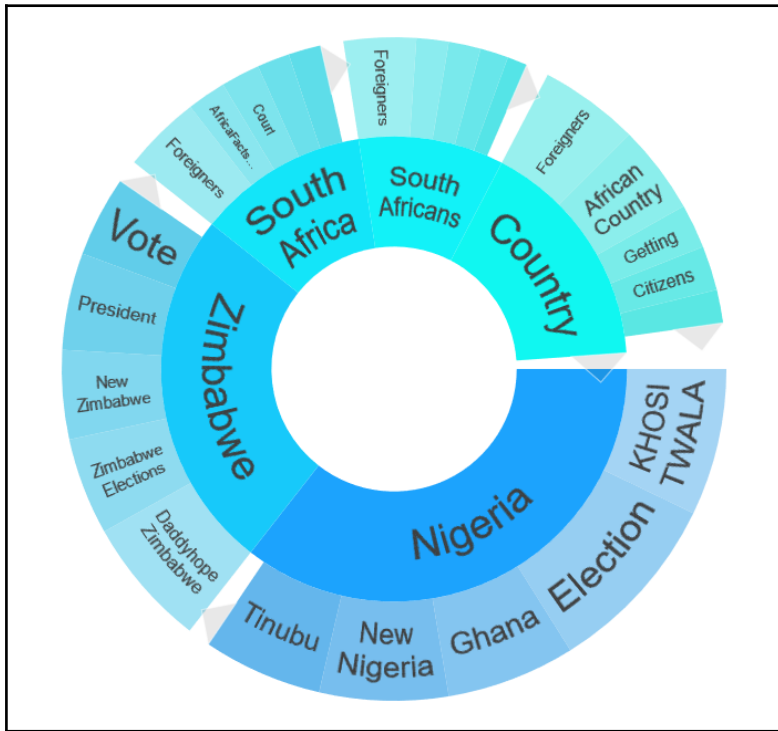
Figure 6: Topics wheel

8.   Category analysis

The categories analysed in this section are 'police', 'home affairs', 'media' and 'civil society'. These categories represent a combined 13% of the entire conversation (see Figure 7).

When the categories alone are broken down for mention volume (see Figure 8), media garners the most mention volume of the categories, followed by home affairs, police and civil society.
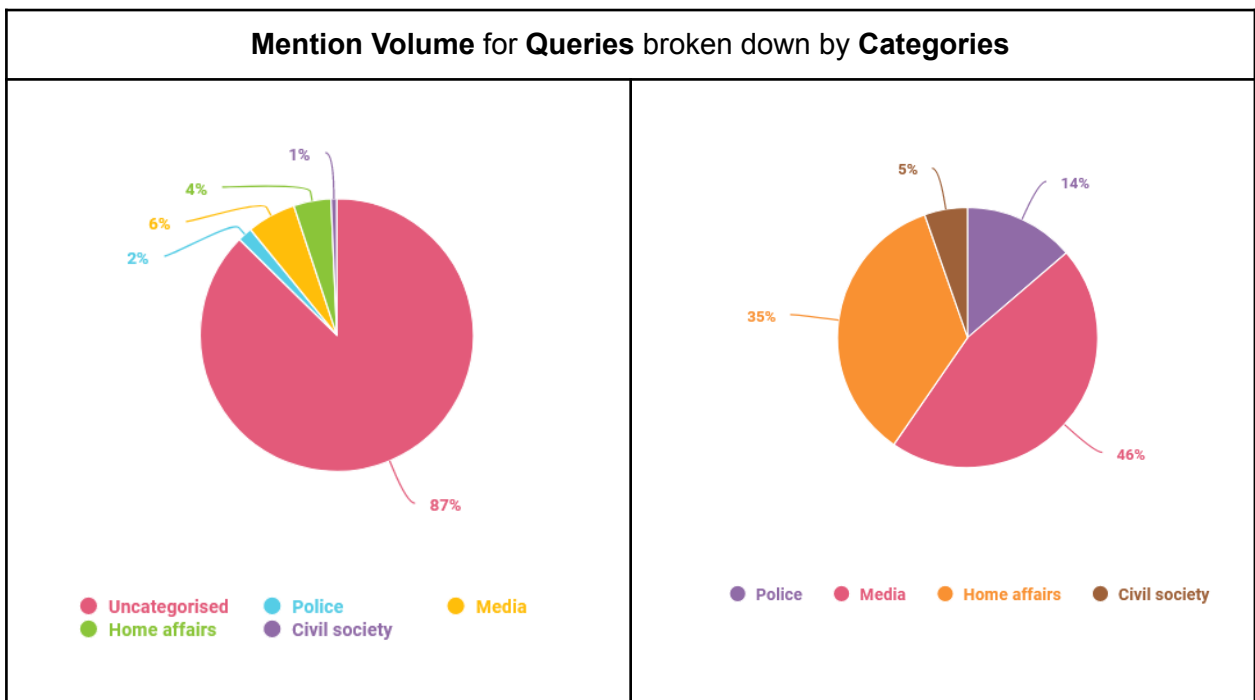

Mention Volume for **Queries** broken down by **Categories**

Figure 7: Categorised vs uncategorised   *Figure 8: Categorised share of voice*

When looking at the mention volume per category over the course of weeks, it is notable that there are peaks and troughs in the conversation (see Figure 9).
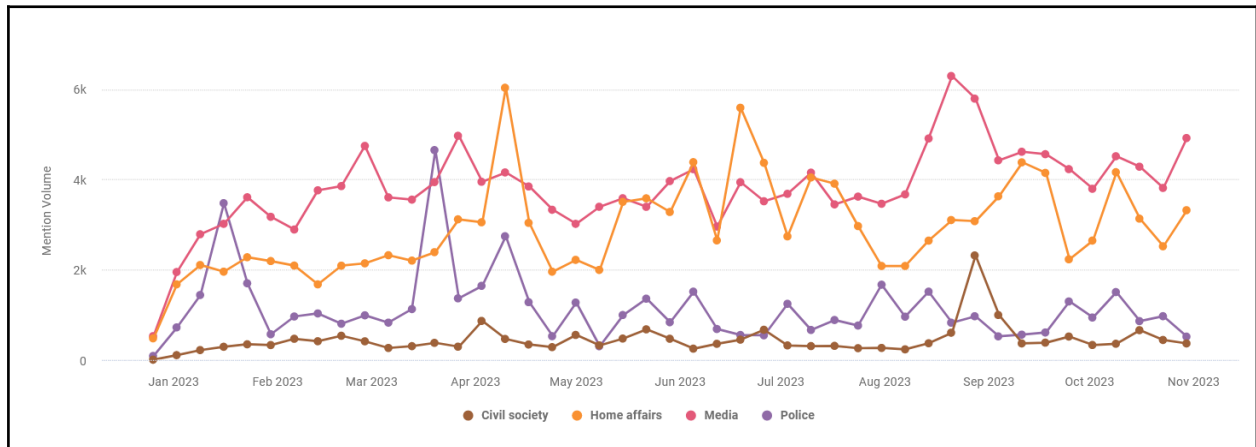

Figure 9: Mention Volume for Weeks broken down by Categories

On 16 January 2023, there was an uptick in mentions related to police. This uptick which entailed a mention volume of 259% higher than usual relates to joint operations and law enforcement efforts which saw collaborations between SAPS and other law enforcement agencies, including the military and metro police. These operations aimed to combat serious crimes. Multiple headlines mention the South African Police Service (SAPS) conducting raids on drug dens and the arrest of undocumented immigrants, particularly from Zimbabwe and Nigeria. These individuals were apprehended for various offences such as possession of stolen property, failure to declare goods, and involvement in illegal diamond mining. A few headlines highlight tensions and xenophobic sentiments towards immigrants, particularly Nigerian nationals. On 19 January, a topical item (see example here) was that police conducted a raid at which Operation Dudula was present. The example tweet/X provides a link to a video of the raid and says "WATCH: SAPS supported by Operation Dudula and community members raid the Nigerian drug dens in Springs town. Stolen cars, various drugs were recovered and young girls forced into prostitutions (sic) were also rescued during the operation." It is not clear if any formal charges were laid against the alleged offenders in the video and raises questions as to the intention behind adding this video to the X platform. There are no young girls seen in the video, as the text to the post explains, only a woman who appears to be in such fear when responding to questions about her living condition that when she walks away, it looks as though she urinated in her pants. The punishment meted out by this kind of vigilantism is problematic because in efforts to punish and draw attention to wrongdoing in a community, vigilantes often break the law[3]. As we see from the video, the policeman is left in a precarious position as he places himself between the vigilantes and the alleged drug dealer. Under South African criminal procedural law, search and seizure is allowed without a warrant provided that certain

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[3] Silke, A. (2001). Dealing with Vigilantism: Issues and Lessons for the Police. The Police Journal, 74(2), 120-133. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258X0107400204

circumstances are met. One of these is that the person whose property is being searched must be informed of the search and they must also be made aware of their right to refuse such search[4]. The alleged wrongdoer in this video appears to be confused while on the phone and to his right, someone who cannot be identified from the video (because their face is covered) is seen digging through his belongings. While these vigilantes may believe that they are acting in the best interest of law enforcement, their lack of knowledge around the procedure of such activities may lead to any evidence found in this way being rejected. The video itself appears purely circumstantial. Hence, from the recording of the video to the actions of the people who attempt a search and seizure all the way through to an account like @TheTruthPanther serving this video content to close to 70 000 followers at a turbulent time for African and Asian foreigners in South Africa the intention behind all this behaviour remains questionable.

From 20 to 26 March 2023, there was another peak for the police category. The mention volume was 382% higher than usual at this point. Refer to Figure 9. The key hashtags during that period were #nationalshutdown, #ramaphosamustgo and #shutdownsa. These hashtags were associated with the National Shutdown protest that the EFF arranged. In terms of why police were mentioned a lot in this peak, it was because police were deployed to ensure that the National Shutdown was a peaceful protest and because there was an incident where an explosive device was set off at the home of former spokesperson for Operation Dudula, Nhlanhla Lux. In relation to this incident, a high reach tweet on 20 March was by journalist, Chriselda Lewis, who tweeted: "#NationalShutdown Police Minister Bheki Cele confirms 'Nobody was physically injured'. Cele visited the home of Nhlanhla Lux and spoke to neighnours (sic) whose windows were shattered. #sabcnews https://t.co/PeuIKTMEjJ". On 25 March, a highest reach mention was from an influencer account, @AdvoBarryRoux. This tweet/X had a reach of 51 520 and was retweeted 1513 times: "RT @AdvoBarryRoux Africa is a movie. Sgaxa after Sgaxa. Netflix got nothing on Mzansi shem. Bheki Cele & Nhlanhla Lux were together on the crook place cooking the bomb story. https://t.co/qhL5n8EO43". "Sgaxa" is loosely translated as a big scandal[5]. Like with the @TheTruthPanther example above, the claim that the police and Nhlanhla Lux were together "cooking up the bomb story" has been served to more than 2 million followers from an anonymised account at a time where a low percentage of citizens (roughly 27%) say they have some trust in the police[6].

From 10 to 16 April, the volume was 128% higher than average for the category of home affairs. This was driven by 527 mentions of #thabobester and 228 mentions of #drnandiphamagudumana. There was a tweet/X by influencer account 'The Instigator' / @Am_Blujay with a reach of 26 272 about prison escapee, Thabo Bester: "Listening to Home

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[4]https://www.burgerhuyserattorneys.co.za/what-are-the-implications-of-search-and-seizure-criminal-procedure-act-explained/
[5]https://www.mzansitaal.co.za/terms/sgaxa/
[6] https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africas-police-must-prioritise-trust

Affairs explaining the Thabo Bester ID story, this boy was just born into drama it's like a movie 🙂". The police category also experienced a peak from 10 to 16 April (mention volume was 184% higher than average). The peak was also driven by #thabobester and another widely retweeted tweet/X by 'The Instigator', with a reach of 13 379 and which read: "RT @Am_Blujay G4S told us Thabo Bester had a laptop in his Cell because he was studying but SAPS is saying he doesn't have any identification, so how did he register to study with Damelin ? #ThaboBester".

From 19 to 25 June the mention volume was 111% higher than usual. See Figure 9. This was driven mainly by 1892 mentions of #sizokthola, 1270 mentions of #sizokuthola and 745 mentions of this link. The link is to a Cape Talk article 'Drug-busting show 'Sizokthola' follows presenter Xolani Khumalo while he raids the businesses and homes of suspected drug dealers with the help of police officials'. Radio 702 tweeted the link to the article saying: "BUSTED! Drug-busting TV show Sizokthola uncovered potential corruption within the Department of Home Affairs." Radio 702's tweet/X had a reach of 587 359. Another high reach tweet/X with a reach of 23 016 was by @SirMakhubo whose account name says 'South Africans First'. The account information identifies the account holder as: • ActionSA Ekurhuleni Caucus Leader • Gauteng PEC Member • Regional Secretary • Retired Lawyer • True Templar • Gym Rat • A Patriot • #LetsFixSouthAfrica". The tweet said: "There you have it South Africans, our country is being sold for a mere R50K!! The drug dealer has a relationship and children with an immigration officer who happens to run a syndicate in Home Affairs to enable illegal immigrants to obtain IDs and Citizenship! #Sizokthola." All of these narratives feed into the idea that immigrants perpetuate crime and place additional pressure on already overburdened systems like SAPS and Home Affairs. However, studies in America show that the tie between immigration and crime is mythical at best, with one paper showing that the incarceration rates of immigrants has been less than US born citizens since 1960[7].

From 21 August to 03 September 2023, there was a peak in the media category. The mention volume was 66% higher than usual. This was driven predominantly by 590 mentions of #zimbabweelections2023 and tweets about the Helen Suzman Foundation's litigation in the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit matter. One high-reach tweet/X by xenophobic pressure group, Put South Africa First's account, @PSAFLive read: "BREAKING NEWS: Helen Suzman Foundation files an Urgent application to stop Mass Deportations of Illegal Immigrants. While the Minister of Home Affairs tries frantically to clean and rid of the Country's illegal immigrants Nicole Fritz of the Helen Suzman Foundation has interdicted the Minister through Rule 18 of the High Court rules to stop the Zimbabweans from being Deported." See Figure 9 below.

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[7]The mythical tie between immigration and crime, Krysten Crwford, Stanford Institute for Economic and Policy Research (2023)

In the same date range, there was a peak for the category 'civil society' from 28 August to 10 September 2023. The mention volume was 528% higher than usual. This peak was driven mainly by 1052 retweets of a [tweet/X](#) by 'AdvoBarryRoux. The tweet/X read: "RT [@AdvoBarryRoux](#) South Africa is a crime! We are led by thugs who register NGOs in their relatives' names & hijack buildings in Johannesburg & claim it's foreigners who hijack them. Come to think of it! Do you think it's possible for an illegal immigrate to take a building by force from govt?". There were also 216 mentions of #jhbfire and 52 of #johannesburgfire. The specific fire that this hashtag refers to is the Usindiso building fire in Albert Street, Marshalltown, Johannesburg. The fire claimed the lives of 74 people and caused numerous burn injuries, displacing the residents from a poorly maintained building which had been where they lived.

There were some notable spikes in overall mention volume for these four categories, particularly in April and September 2023. Figure 10 shows when the four categories combined had spikes and how these were composed across the four categories.
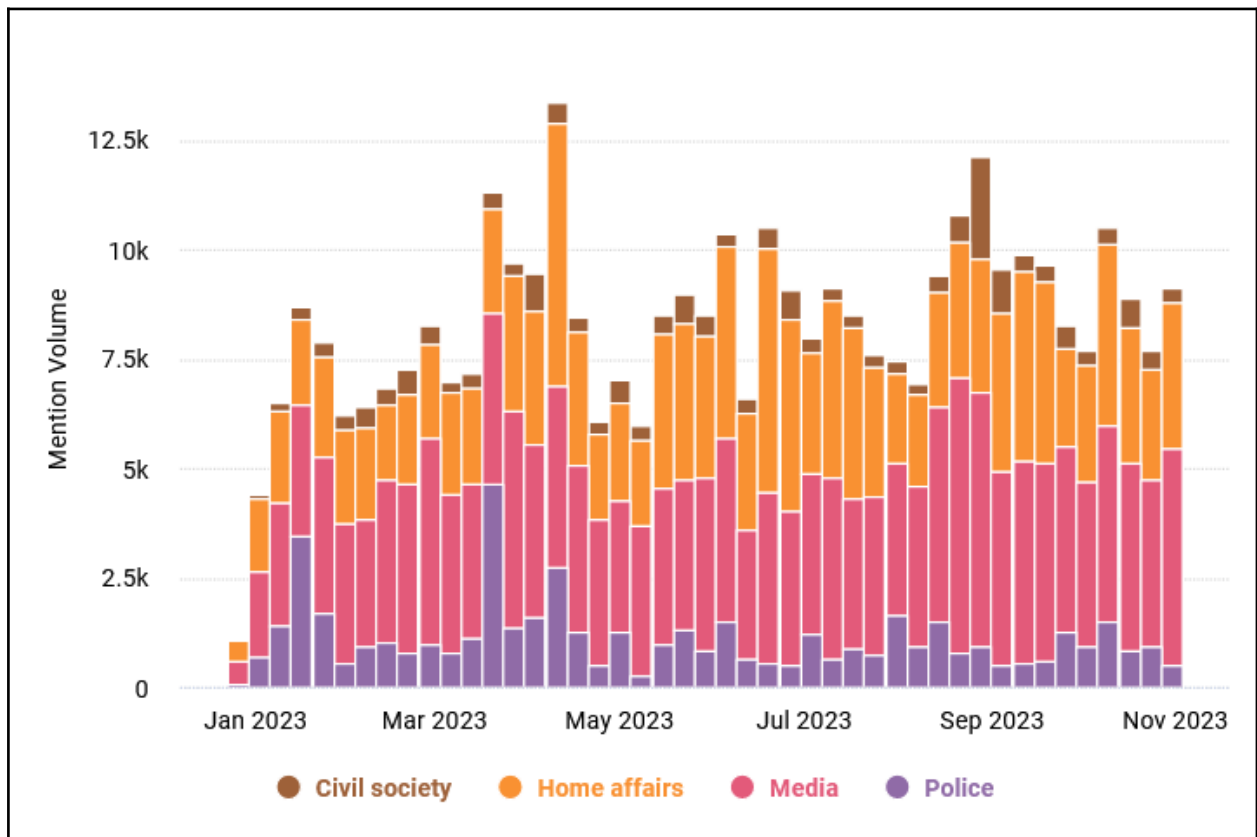

Figure 10: Mention Volume for Weeks broken down by Categories

The highest mention volume for the combined categories was on 14 April 2023. The top five most prevalent themes on 14 April include:

1. Zimbabwean Exemption Permits: Mentions involve discussing the decision by Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi to terminate Zimbabwean Exemption Permits, along with legal challenges and proposed resolutions.

2. Identification and Travel Documents: Headlines address the absence of registered identification for Thabo Bester, a convicted rapist and murderer, as well as the briefing by Home Affairs Minister Motsoaledi on the identification and travel documents of Bester and Dr Nandipha Magudumana.

3. Actions of Home Affairs Minister Motsoaledi: Discussion about the decisions, statements, and involvement of Home Affairs Minister Motsoaledi in a range of matters related to permits, identification, and legal challenges.

4. Challenges and Legal Proceedings: The headlines mention the legal challenges against the termination of Zimbabwean Exemption Permits, the High Court in Pretoria hearing final arguments, and the pending judgement on these challenges.

5. Undocumented Immigrants and ID Acquisition: Some mentions entail discussion about undocumented immigrants and their ability to obtain identification documents, as well as the case of a specific individual who possesses an ID document with allegedly questionable details (see example here).

A selection of examples of these mentions are contained in Figure 11 below.

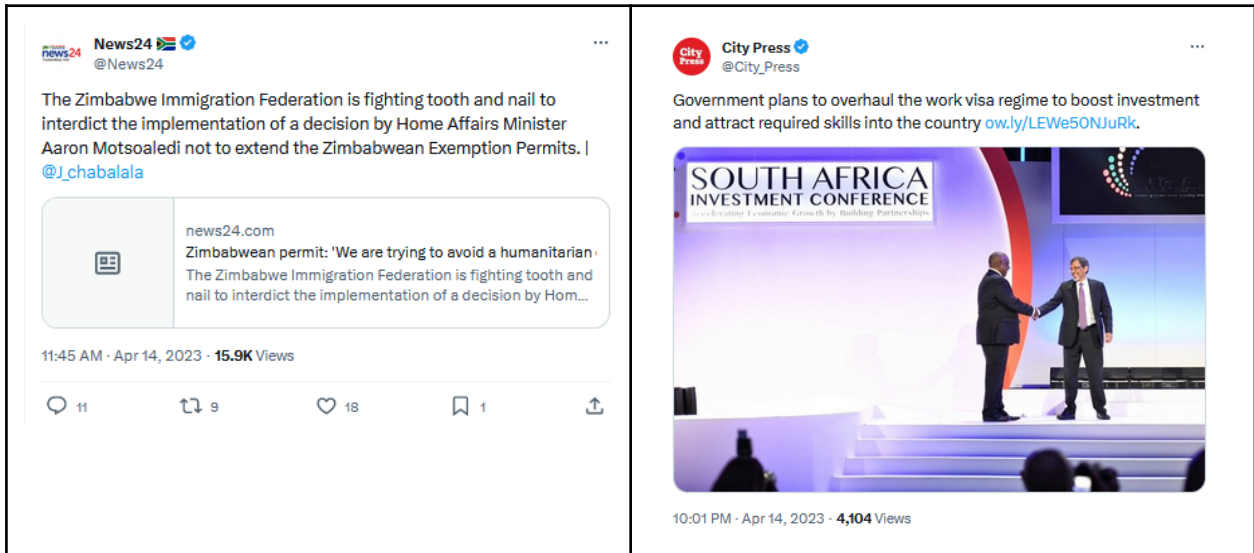*Figure 11: Selection of mentions from 14 April 2023*

9.   Key comparisons across categories

The greatest volume of original content is generated in the media category, followed closely by the civil society category. A dynamic that is interesting when looking at the engagement by category is how extensively content relating to Home Affairs and the Police is retweeted. It is likely that this has to do with information asymmetry. If Home Affairs or SAPS provide an update on a specific matter, then accounts tend to retweet it. It is similar to the handles of private security firms that provide information on crimes, which get high engagement. Home Affairs related content garners the most comments and replies amongst the four categories, followed by civil society, police and media.
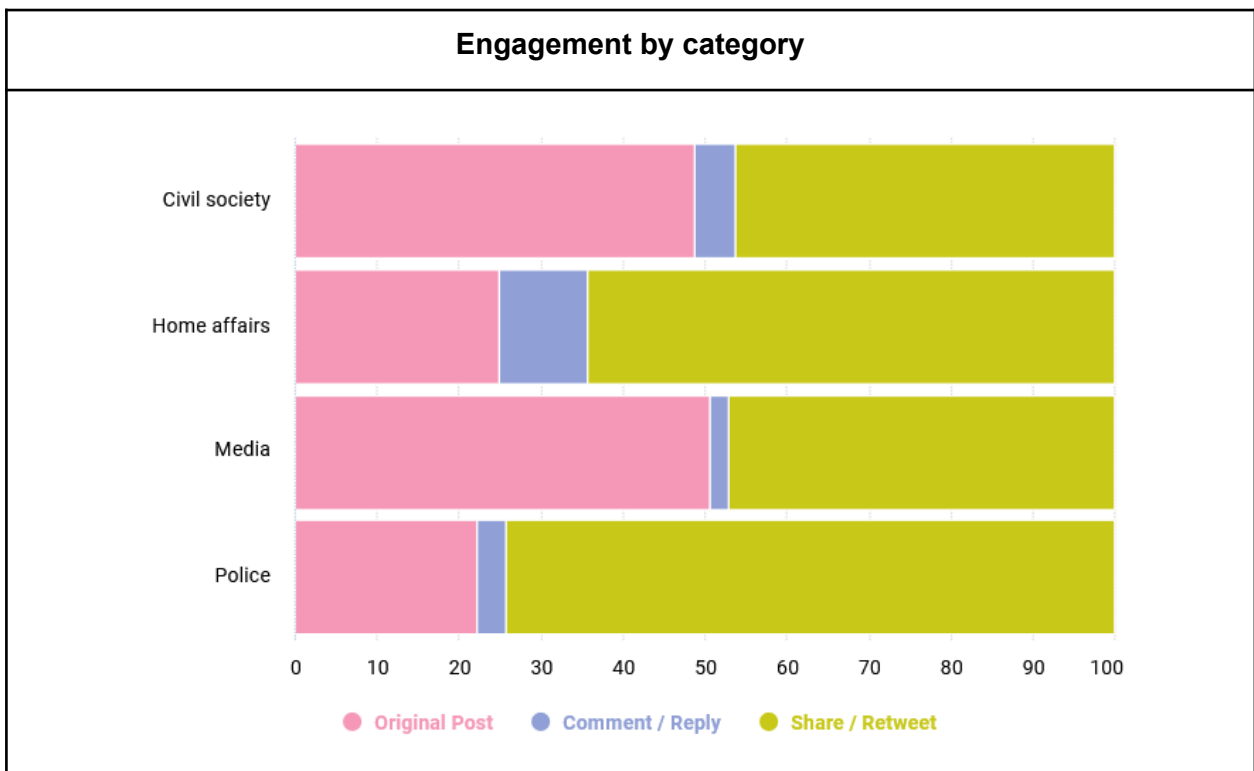

Figure 12: Mention Volume for Categories broken down by Mention Type

The purpose of this section is not to explain why the numbers and sentiment are where they are but rather to provide useful analytics and reliable figures to all stakeholders who review this report to inform their decision making on the topic of xenophobia. In terms of sentiment by category (see Figure 13), the category with the greatest proportion of negative sentiment is police (58% negative), followed by civil society (41% negative). Interestingly, of the four categories, Home Affairs has the lowest proportion of negative sentiment (27%) followed by media (38%). While the positive sentiment is minimal for each category, Home Affairs and the media have the highest proportion of positive sentiment (3%), followed by Civil Society (2%) and police (1%). Home Affairs has the highest proportion of neutral sentiment (70%), followed by media (59%), civil society (57%) and finally, police 41%. In police as a category, the negative sentiment (58%) outweighs the neutral sentiment (41%) and positive (1%).
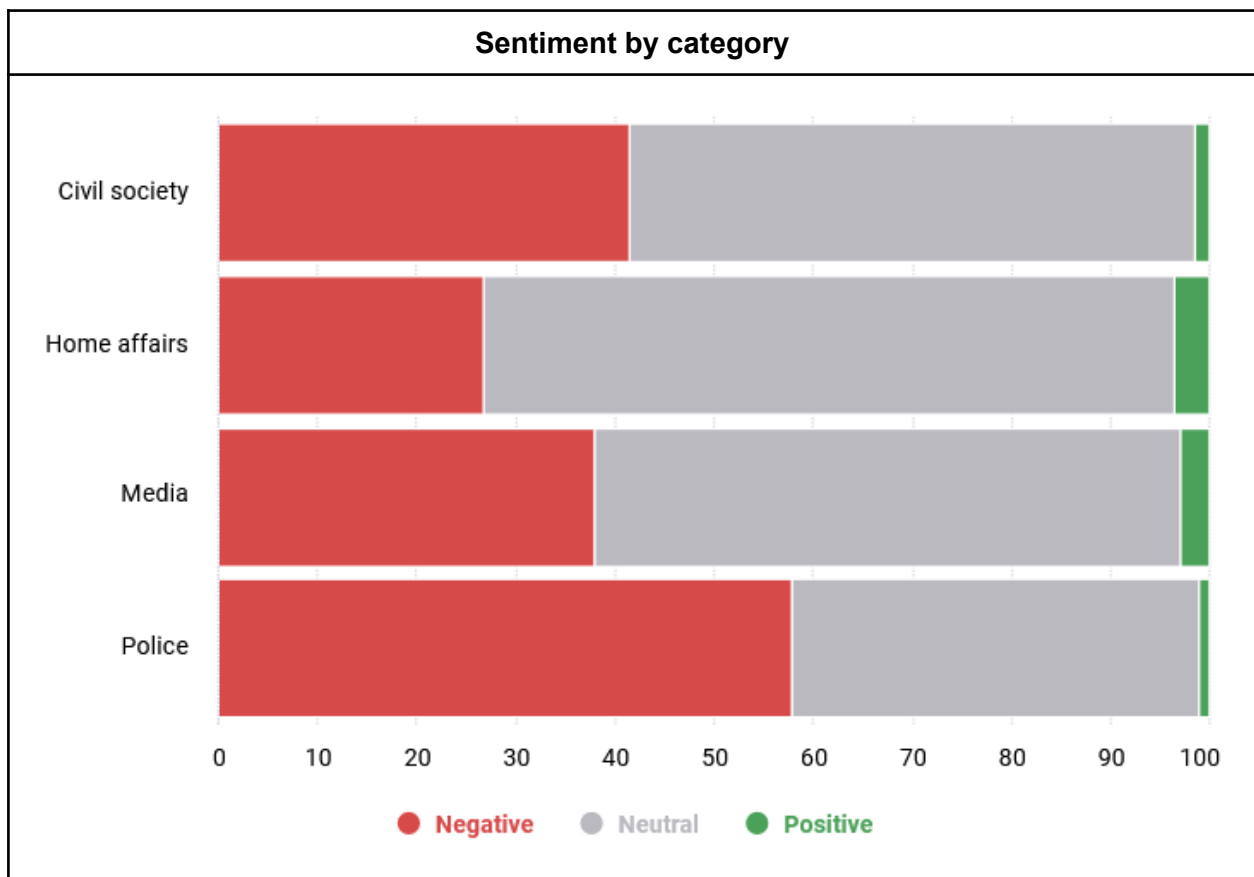

Figure 13: Sentiment by category: Mention Volume for Categories broken down by Sentiment

For the category, police, (see Figure 14), the following were the topics that had negative sentiment. Within the negative content associated with this conversation category, 'illegal immigrants', 'Nigerians', 'Home Affairs' and 'SANDF' are topical.

Figure 14: Negative sentiment mentions for 'police'

The following sections examine each category by expanding on the key metrics and mention volume per category.

10.   Home Affairs

In the category, Home Affairs, there were 131 159 mentions by 37 730 unique authors. See Figure 15. This mention volume had risen compared to the prior period of the same duration, as had the number of unique authors showing that engagement with this topic is growing. The trending topics within the category segment were 'illegal immigrants', 'visa free access' and 'Helen Suzman Foundation'.

Total mentions		Unique authors		Trending topics
131.16k	↗ **44%** Previous period: 91.32k	**37.73k**	↗ **25%** Previous period: 30.11k	1. illegal immigrants 2. visa free access 3. Helen Suzman Foundation

Figure 15: Volume metrics for 'Home Affairs' category for 01 January to 05 November 2023

In terms of the mention volume for Home Affairs, there were two major peaks - one from 10 to 16 April (point A) and the other from 19 to 25 June 2023 (point B). These peaks have been discussed in Section 9: Key comparisons across categories. For the most part, the mention volume fluctuates between 2 000 to 4 000 mentions per week.
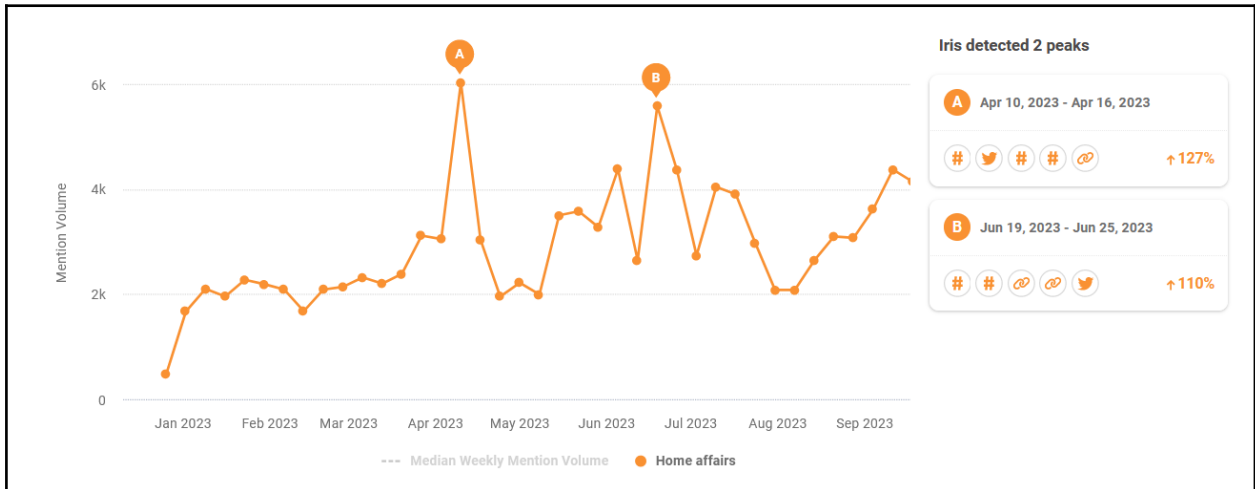
Figure 16: Mention Volume for Weeks broken down for 'Home Affairs'

11. Policing and crime prevention

For the police category, there were 51 315 mentions by 15 074 unique authors. This mention volume grew in comparison to the previous period and the number of authors also grew. The key trending topics in this category were 'illegal mining', 'South African Police Service' and 'illegal immigrants'. There is a degree of overlap between the Home Affairs and police categories. See Figure 17.
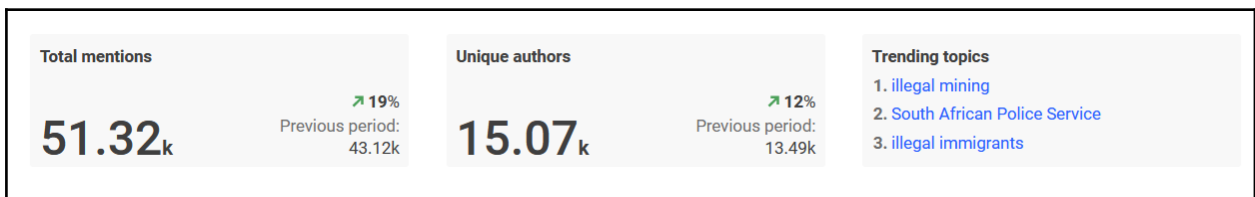

Figure 17: Volume metrics for 'policing' category for 01 January to 05 November 2023

In terms of the peaks in the mention volume for the policing category, these came in the first half of the year, with peaks from 16 to 22 January (B), 20 to 26 March (A) and 10 to 16 April 2023 (C). See Figure 18.
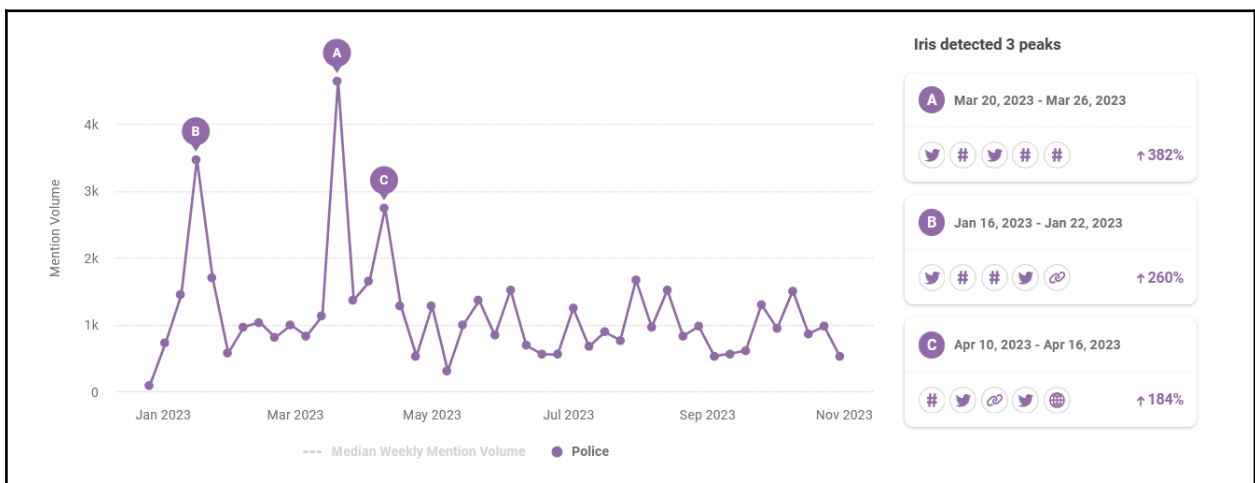

Figure 18: Mention Volume for Weeks broken down for 'policing'

12. The Media

For the media category, the total mentions were 171 842 by 26 158 unique authors. Similar to the other categories, the conversation in this category grew compared to the previous period, as did the number of unique authors. See Figure 19.
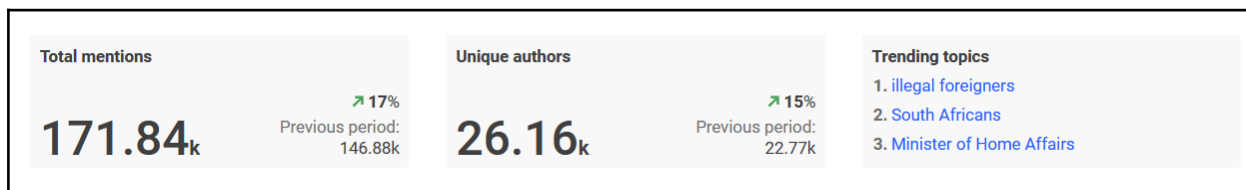

Total mentions		Unique authors		Trending topics
171.84k	↗ **17%** Previous period: 146.88k	**26.16k**	↗ **15%** Previous period: 22.77k	1. illegal foreigners 2. South Africans 3. Minister of Home Affairs

Figure 19: Volume metrics for 'media' category for 01 January to 05 November 2023

There was one peak in mention volume in the media category. This occurred from 21 - 27 August 2023. See point A in Figure 20.
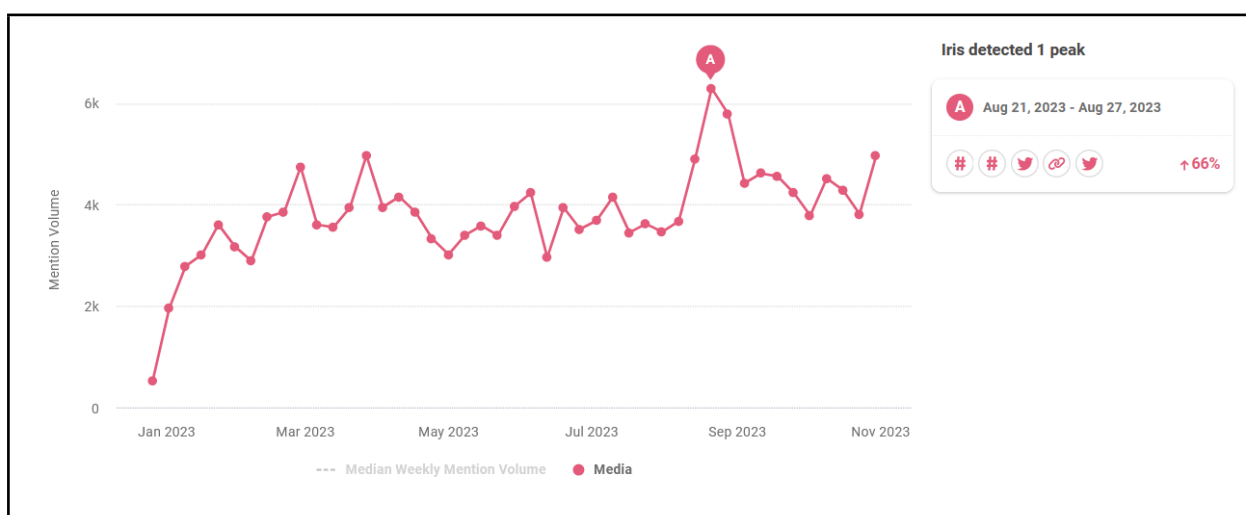

Figure 20: Mention Volume for Weeks broken down for 'the media'

13. Civil Society

The total mentions for the civil society category during the reporting period was 20 034 mentions by 6 313 unique authors. Refer to Figure 21. As with all other categories, the mention volume grew. The number of unique authors grew significantly - by 69%. The trending topics were 'mass deportation', 'NGOs Media ANC DA EFF' and 'Helen Suzman Foundation'. An overlap is that Helen Suzman Foundation appears in both the civil society and Home Affairs category.

Total mentions		Unique authors		Trending topics
20.03k	↗ **17%** Previous period: 17.11k	**6313**	↗ **69%** Previous period: 3732	1. mass deportation 2. NGOs Media ANC DA EFF 3. Helen Suzman Foundation

Figure 21: Volume metrics for 'civil society' category for 01 January to 05 November 2023

There were two peaks in the mention volume for the category 'civil society'. These occurred from 28 August to 10 September 2023 (point B) and from 03 to 09 April 2023 (point A). See Figure 21.
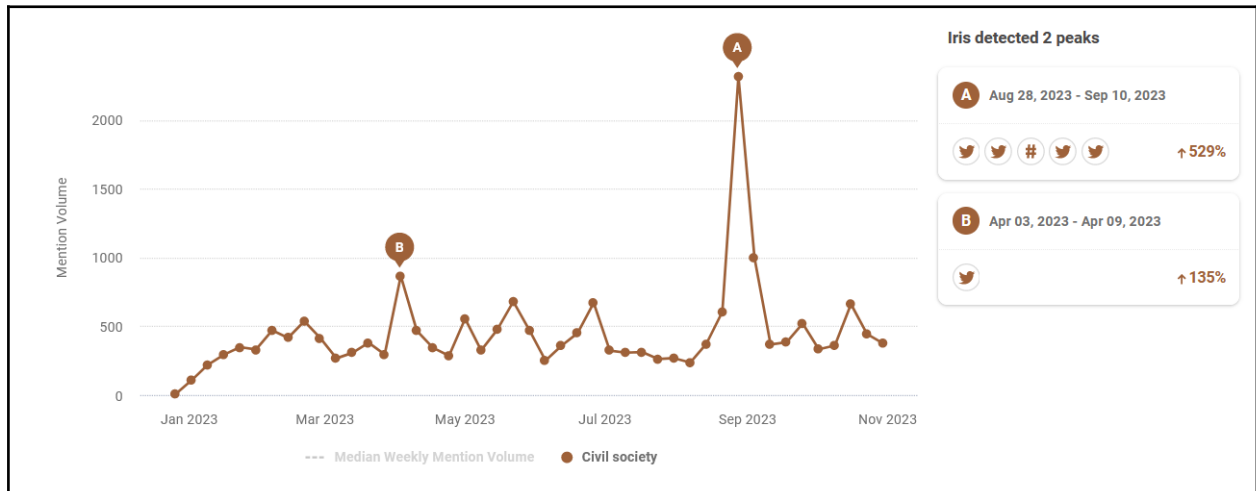

Figure 22: Mention Volume for Weeks broken down for 'civil society'

14.   Micro-narratives per category

The following micro-narratives were identified by observing the conversation over the duration of the research period by using social media listening tools. The reason for flagging them is because of the potential of such micro-narratives to shift from being peripheral to becoming widely accepted within everyday conversation. These micro-narratives do not represent CABC's views, but are the micro-narratives that have been observed in the conversation.

14.1.   Home Affairs

- **Fraudulent documents**: Home Affairs officials are issuing fraudulent South African IDs to foreigners.

- **Audit all documents issued by Home Affairs**: All documents issued to immigrants must be audited because the extent of fraud is so widespread that no document can be trusted.

- **Pan Africanism is about votes**: It suits the EFF to have a Pan African stance because immigrants with South African IDs vote for them.

- **What about other country's visa policies and restrictions**: This micro narrative includes whataboutery about visa bans, visa restrictions, visa-free access, and visa applications. It highlights various countries' decisions regarding their visa policies and the impact on travellers. And compares South Africa's policy positions.

- **Mass deportations**: Illegal immigrants must be arrested and there must be mass deportations.

14.2. Policing and crime prevention
- **Inept police**: The police are useless, so vigilante action is justified.

- **Police soliciting bribes**: The police solicit bribes from immigrants.

- **Illegal foreigners are responsible for crime**: Police must arrest illegal foreigners, because they are responsible for various crimes such as drug trafficking, armed robbery, kidnapping, and extortion.

14.3. The Media
- **Voetsek SA Media**: The South African media houses must go away because they are biased in their reporting.

- **Stratcom journalists**: The media is captured and drives political messaging. Therefore, citizens need to get their own source of news.

- **Thumaminion journalists**: Thumaminion journalists report favourably about President Ramaphosa and the faction of the ANC to which he is aligned.

14.4. Civil Society
- **Voetsek pro-immigrant NGOs**: These NGOs are a problem. They must be sorted out and need to go.

- **Foreign funders** are driving an agenda by funding NGOs. NGOs in turn, acting on the interests of the foreign funders, are driving a colour revolution in South Africa.

- **Government and NGO relations**: Government must clamp down on NGOs and close these foreign-funded NGOs because they are undermining the sovereignty of the country.

By examining these micro-narratives, a customised intervention can be developed. It is recommended that these micro-narratives be workshopped to determine how to respond to them. This is of significance because of the potential of these micro-narratives to gradually integrate into our daily discussions.

15.   Conclusion

The data shows a significant increase in conversation volume and more participants, indicating growing interest in the topic. In 2023, the weekly mentions varied between 50 000 and 75 000. The top five hashtags are #khositwala, #operationdudula, #putsouthaficansfirst (spelled without an 'r'), #zimbabwe, and #putsouthafricansfirst. The main discussion topics focus on South Africa, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, with a particular emphasis on elections in both countries. A key feature of the research is a category analysis, with the combined categories of 'police', 'home affairs', 'media', and 'civil society' accounting for 13% of the overall conversation. Media receives the highest mention volume, followed by home affairs, police, and civil society. Media and civil society produce the most original content, while there is notable retweeting activity for content related to home affairs and the police. Micro-narratives were identified through observation of the conversation using social media listening tools during the research period. It is recommended that these micro-narratives be workshopped to inform the ongoing development of customised interventions.

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