



Monthly Social Listening Updates & Recommendations for online conversations about immigrants in South Africa #3

1 - 30 June 2024

Overview

This report provides an overview of online conversations about immigrants in South Africa for the month of June 2024. This report looks at the conversation volume, key metrics, topical events and which authors are driving the conversation. The focal point during June 2024 was the announcement of the results of South Africa’s National and Provincial elections.

Conversation volume

For the month of June, data points that made reference to xenophobia, i.e. based on the keyword approach that is used to track the conversation, consisted of approximately 416 560 mentions from more than 104 000 authors (refer to Figure 1). This represents an increase of 2% compared to May 2024. The overwhelming majority of these mentions consisted of retweets (~386 940), resulting in a retweet percentage of 93%. The [Centre for Analytics & Behavioural Change](#) (CABC) regards this percentage as high and based on previous studies within the xenophobia conversation. A high retweet percentage is one indicator that the conversation may be subject to narrative manipulation, as heavy retweeting is generally used to amplify particular narratives online.

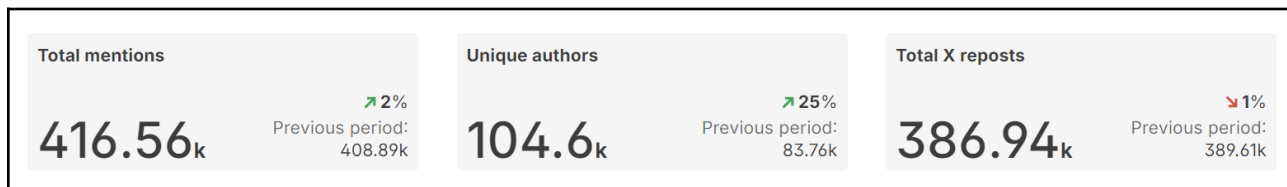


Figure 1: Key volume metrics

Topical events:

- Election results: The release of the election results was of high interest during the reporting period. President Cyril Ramaphosa made remarks about putting South Africa first during the Independent Electoral Commission event at which the election results were announced on 02 June 2024¹. Central to the Patriotic Alliance’s (PA) election campaign was a call for the mass deportation of ‘illegal foreigners’, a position which they sustained into the post-election period. In the conversation, the EFF’s open border policy and anti-xenophobia position is discussed as having cost them at the polls. EFF President, Julius Malema said

¹ Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the IEC Election Results Announcement at the Results Operation Centre, Midrand:
<https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-2024-iec-election-results-announcement-02-jun-2024>

this was not true and that the EFF would not compromise a principle to please non-existing voters².

- Government of National Unity (GNU) negotiations: Ahead of the negotiations, PA leader, Gayton McKenzie, said during an interview with Eyewitness News “We are going to use this seats [sic] very strategically to make it very uncomfortable for any illegal foreigner in this country.” See video [here](#).

Trending hashtags:

- #abahambe [1]; [2]; [3]: The word abahambe (meaning ‘go away’) was popularised as a hashtag by the PA when it went to the South African / Zimbabwean border and chased away Zimbabweans who were allegedly trying to cross into South Africa illegally. Posts on X.com that received the highest reach for this hashtag were made by the PA’s official handle. The posts are about the post-election Government of National Unity negotiations. The PA’s Gayton McKenzie indicated that his party wanted one of three Ministerial positions - (1) Minister of Home Affairs, or (2) Police or (3) Sport. These are listed in order of preference.
- #OnsBaizaNie [1]; [2]; [3]: ‘Ons Baiza Nie’ (we are not scared, we don’t stand back) is the strapline of the PA³. The top ten X.com posts based on reach that made use of this hashtag were all from the Patriotic Alliance’s official X.com handle and the content also related to the GNU talks.
- #PutSouthAfricansFirst [1]; [2]; [3]: The X posts using this hashtag included reports of Zimbabwean suspects being arrested for various criminal activities including claims of robbery and fuel theft and calls to deport ‘illegal foreigners’. The anti-immigrant sentiment in these posts was notable. There is a growing anti-immigrant movement that is pushing for the interests of South Africans to be prioritised over immigrants’ interests.

Top reach content:

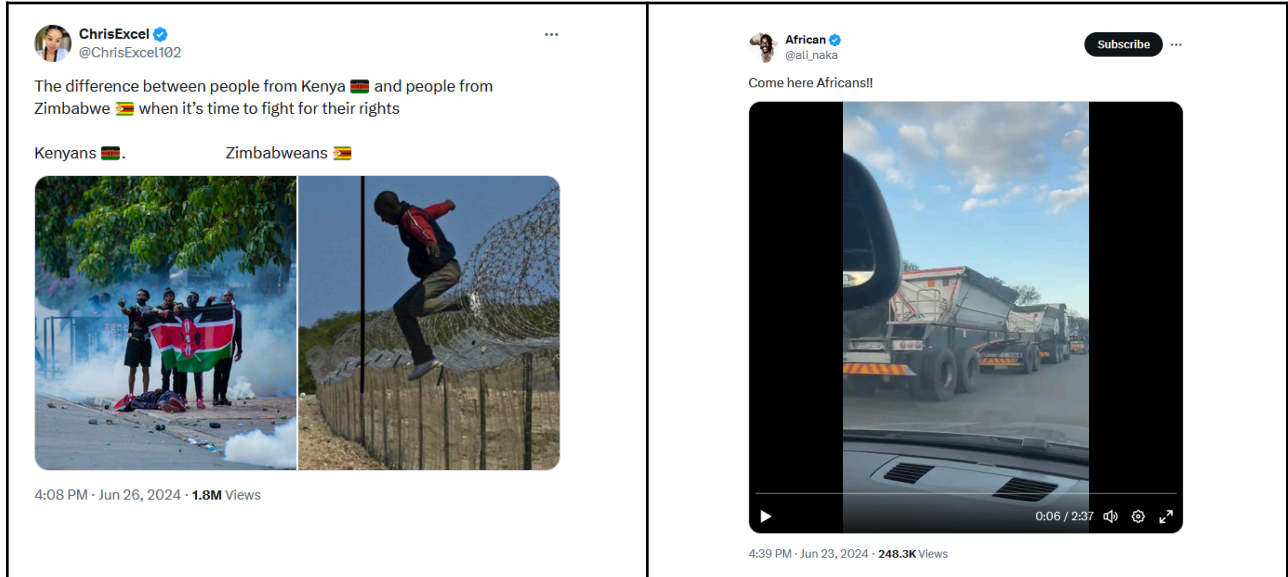
The X posts in Table 1 were the top two highest-reach posts.

Table 1: Highest reach X posts

1.	2.
----	----

² <https://www.ewn.co.za/2024/06/01/malema-rubbishes-claims-that-eff-s-open-border-policy-cost-them-votes>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2159549660967583/posts/2975580816031126/>



Author analysis

- Top 10 most mentioned Twitter/X posters:

The top 10 most mentioned accounts were notably all political leaders or parties other than the Independent Electoral Commission’s handle, which was of interest due to the election results being announced. See Table 2.











Table 2: Most mentioned Twitter/X posters

Most Mentioned X Posters	POSTS ▼	REPOSTS	ALL POSTS	IMPRESSIONS
@onsbaizanie	20015	27562	47577	203889545
@gaytonmck	17032	9910	26942	102530949
@our_da	1880	1695	3575	10972549
@effsouthafrica	1593	1495	3088	14626851
@myanc	1272	1157	2429	8297335
@helenzille	1080	694	1774	4889489
@vfplus	744	1263	2007	15433191
@kenny_t_kunene	668	187	855	4921342
@iec	661	1224	1885	15004424
@julius_s_malema	635	355	990	4155519

- Top 10 Twitter/X posters:

Interestingly, the highest volume posters do not include political leaders. A number of the accounts that post a high volume of content on X are anonymous accounts. See Table 3.

Table 3: Top 10 Twitter/X posters

X POSTER	MATCHING POSTS ▼	SENTIMENT ☺			IMPACT ☺	X ☺
		POS	NEG	NEU	AVERAGE	FOLLOWERS
 @DgDen	941	1	853	87	0.5	685
 @connoisseur_jr	770	0	0	770	0	50
 @Samuel33861829	741	27	307	407	0.2	985
 @masotobe39	719	22	392	305	28.5	7 329
 @sirpeey	705	11	291	403	0.3	900
 @Lulu_Graezinski	638	20	289	329	0	1 353
 @BMrehwa	623	47	256	320	30.6	8 753
 @dze_diva	533	0	0	533	0	73
 @mpanaemesiheike	521	5	252	264	0	698
 @MYKAPTENI	512	19	250	243	24.6	5 632

Analysis and commentary

A 2% increase in mentions was recorded within the online anti-immigrant conversation in June. This suggests continued public interest in the topic of immigrants in South Africa, potentially driven by the recent election. A significant portion of the conversation (93%) consists of retweets. This could be a sign of coordinated efforts to amplify specific narratives, particularly considering the presence of political parties in the top 10 most mentioned authors list.

The recent election results and subsequent government formation discussions appear to be a major driver of the conversation. Notably, the PA's anti-immigrant rhetoric is highlighted.

The top trending hashtags all originate from the Patriotic Alliance, suggesting their attempt to shape the online discussion around xenophobia in the context of the elections and the formation of a Government of National Unity.

The report identifies prominent hashtags like #PutSouthAfricansFirst that promote prioritising South African interests over immigrants, indicating the sustained presence of an anti-immigrant movement online.

Summary of Recommendations

We recommend civil society organisations, campaigns, and the media:

- Leverage insights from the report to tailor messaging and interventions to address the most prevalent narratives and concerns surrounding immigrants.
- Recognise prominent influencers and online communities driving xenophobic rhetoric, and develop strategies to counter their narratives.
- Organise workshops, dialogues, and cultural exchange events that foster positive interactions between citizens and immigrants.
- Lobby for policies that promote integration, address legitimate concerns about job competition fairly and strengthen protections for immigrants.

- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and adjust approaches based on new data and insights.



**Funded by
the European Union**

This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CABIC and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.