

**Community Protests in South Africa:
Trends, Analysis and Explanations**

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2010 Report by: Hirsh Jain**

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Executive Summary:

This report presents a continuation of research on the frequency and the nature of service delivery protests throughout South Africa. This study is developed from media-reports of community protests contained in the South African Local Government Briefings Report¹ and the SA Media News Database². Hirsh Jain, a noted research scholar attending Harvard Law School, completed the initial report in 2010. Jelani Karamoko, also attending Harvard Law School, completed the revised and updated report this year.

Although the frequency of community protests has fallen significantly from the heightened levels of 2009, the propensity to commit violent acts during community protests continues to rise. The declining rate of community protests coincided with the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in June 2010. The period surrounding the FIFA World Cup appears to conform to the pattern of fewer community protests during holiday periods. While the falling rate of community protests is a welcome development, the continued violence is troubling. Since 2010, the country has witnessed unprecedented rates of violent protests. These findings suggest that there remains strong public discontent with municipal service delivery throughout South Africa despite the appearance of relative calm.

From June 2010 to the present, the occurrence of community protests has fallen dramatically. South Africa experienced an average of **8.73** protests per month, and **9.83** protests per month in 2007 and 2008 respectively. In 2009, the average number of protests ballooned to **17.75** per month. Beginning in June 2010, the rising rate of community protests ended abruptly,

¹ The SA Local Government Research Centre publishes the South African Local Government Briefing monthly. A range of issues affecting local government is discussed, including the outbreak of community protests in its Community Protest Monitor.

² The SA Media News Database covers more than 120 South African newspapers and periodicals, with full text articles available from 1997 to the present. This report compiles figures based on articles published in the following newspapers: Cape Argus, Citizen, Daily Dispatch, Diamond Fields Advertiser, Eastern Province Herald, Pretoria News, Star, Sunday Times, The New Age.

followed by a period of diminishing frequency. For the entirety of 2010, the average number of community protests fell to **11.08** per month. After June 2010, the nation experienced relative calm with only **6.14** protests per month for the remainder of the year. Protests have continued to decline during the first five months of 2011, with an average of only **8.80** protests per month.

Since mid-2009, despite the reduced frequency of community protests an increasing proportion of protests have led to violence. While only **36.86%** of protests taking place between February 2007 and March 2009 were violent, **53.00%** of protests taking place during or after April 2009 were violent. In the 3rd quarter of 2009, the 4th quarter of 2009 and the 1st quarter of 2010, **50.65 %**, **52.38%** and **64.06%** of the protests, respectively, were violent. Although the outbreak of community protests remains subdued in 2011, in only one month has the proportion of violent protests remained below 50%.

Protesters often cite the lack of accountability of government officials, along with the absence of public participation as factors that further aggravate their service delivery complaints. The local elections held this May likely contributed to the sustained reduction in the frequency of community protests by providing residents an outlet for expressing their grievances through the ballot box. The data suggests protest activity is likely to increase if communities believe government officials are neglecting the service delivery promises made during election campaigns.

I. Basic Trends

A. Reduction in the Frequency of Community Protests

A Note on Methodology:

This report is a continuation of research that began in 2010 by Hirsh Jain, a noted research scholar attending Harvard Law School. The updated report documents the diminishing frequency of service delivery protests throughout South Africa, a conclusion supported by an analysis of media-reports contained in the South African Local Government Briefings Report and the SA Media News Database. Relying on media reports of community protests creates inherent limitations in the dataset, as the reports are summaries of complex events and likely to omit information. Additionally, it is likely that not all service delivery protests receive media coverage. A key strength, however, lies in the consistency of the reporting over the time period under examination.

Data drawn from the Municipal IQ Hotspots Monitor³ is used throughout this report as a measure of comparison, and to further substantiate conclusions. It is important to note that the statistical data put forth by this report and the data from the Municipal IQ Hotspots Monitor is not identical. Differences between the figures reported by Municipal IQ and our reported figures are attributable to differing criteria used to define a “community protest.” Municipal IQ identifies “major” municipal service delivery protests, as those protests where communities oppose the pace or quality of service delivery by their municipalities. In addition to this qualification, we include instances where protesters failed to explicitly cite the inadequacy of service delivery (by merely citing “corruption” on the part of municipal officials or complaining about various conditions, such as inadequate housing, for which local government is not solely responsible).

³ Municipal IQ is an organization that monitors the socio-economic performance of South African municipalities.

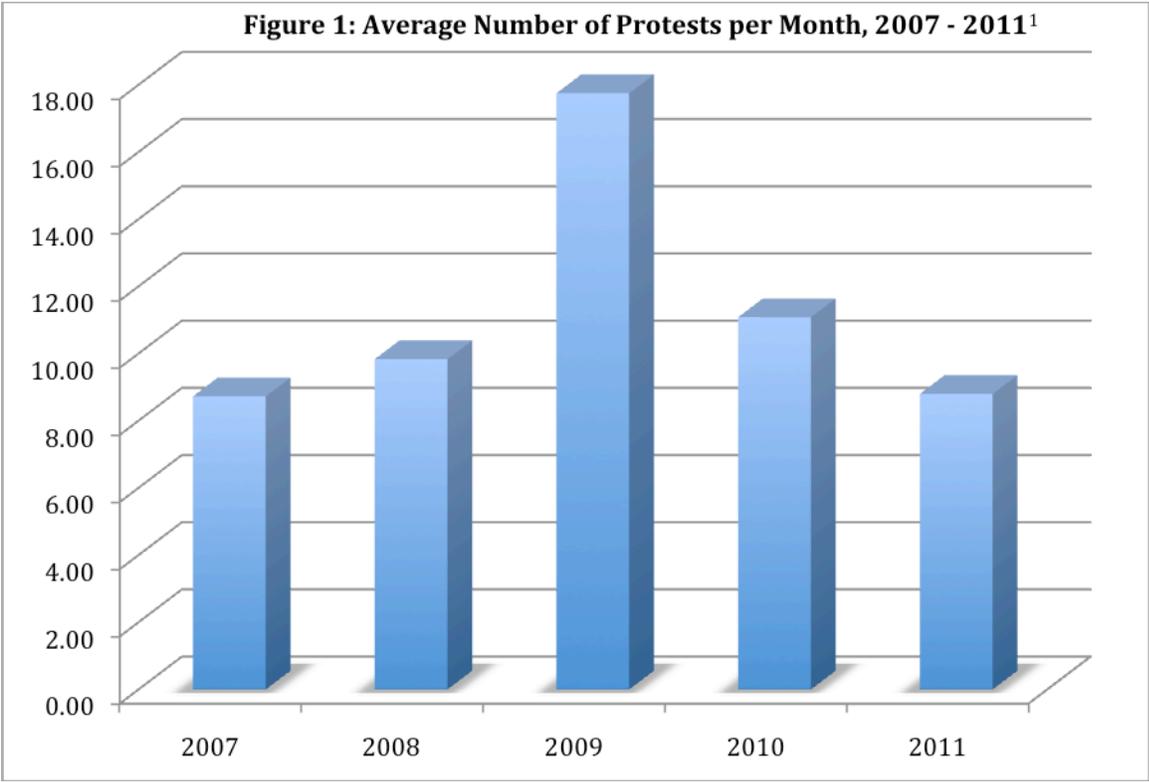
This approach has been chosen for two reasons. First, because of the difficulties in defining precisely what the concerns of a set of protesters are, especially given the size and the spontaneous nature of many of the protests that have occurred in the last several years, we are reluctant to exclude particular protests as not being of a “service delivery” nature. Instead, a broader definition of community protests is helpful in comprehensively capturing and studying the phenomenon of civil unrest in South African communities. Second, a broader definition of community protests allows for distinctions between the various types of protests (distinguishing between protests where the grievances cited by protesters are actually issues for which local government is legally responsible, from those protests where the concerns mentioned fall outside the authority of local government). These distinctions are instructive in analyzing the phenomenon of civil unrest generally, and thus ought not be excluded from analysis.

Often times, large disparities in the absolute number of reported protests result from the differences in defining “community protest”. For instance, Municipal IQ reports for 2007 and 2008, 32 and 27 “major” protests respectively. The sample data we analyzed using the broader definition of community protest reports for 2007 and 2008, 96 and 118 community protests respectively. Despite the methodological differences, both our data and that provided by Municipal IQ often support the same conclusions, as will be illustrated below.

Our Findings:

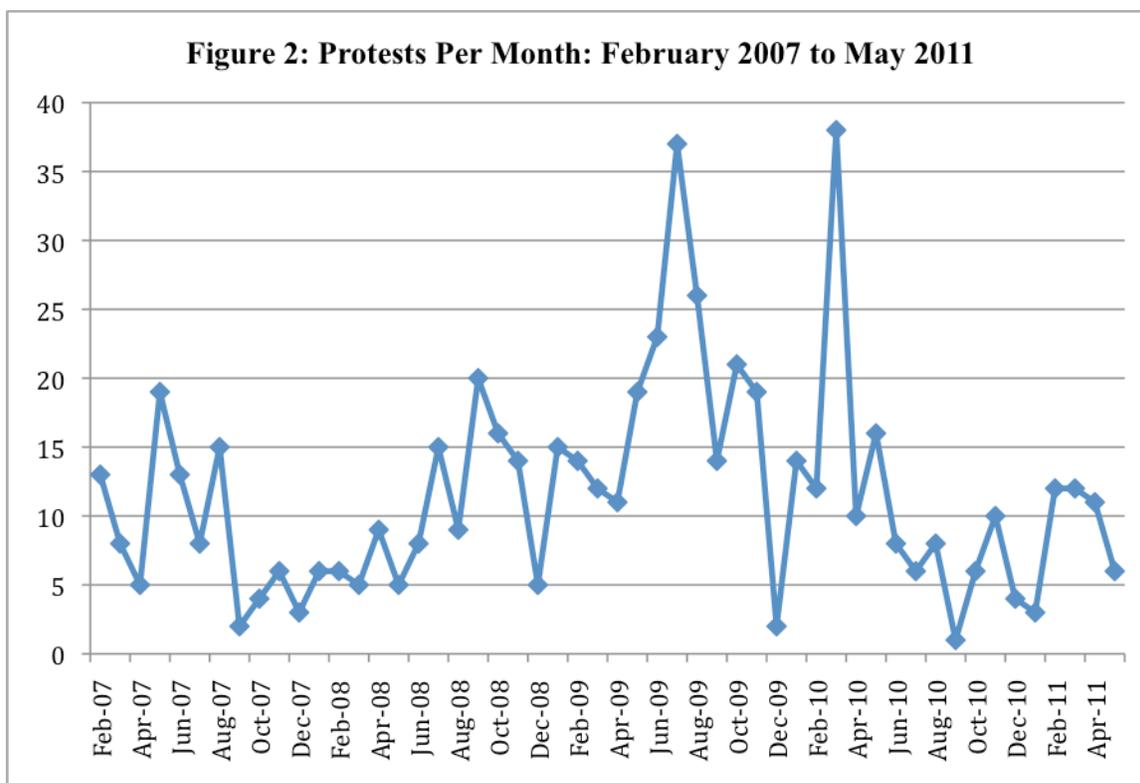
The frequency of community protests occurring across South Africa increased substantially over the course of three years before reversing the trend, and falling dramatically from June 2010 to the present. In 2007, the country experienced an average of **8.73** protests a month. In 2008, that figure rose to an average of **9.83** protests per month. In 2009, however, the average number of protests ballooned to **17.75** per month, nearly doubling the figure from the

previous year. Community protests remained a frequent occurrence in the beginning of 2010 (January through May), as an average of **18.00** protests per month took place across the country. With the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in June, however, community protests fell dramatically and remained relatively subdued with only **6.14** protests per month for the remainder of the year. For 2010 as a whole, the average number of protest incidents decreased to **11.08** protests per month. Protests have continued to decline during the first five months of 2011, with an average of only **8.80** protests per month. So far this year, these figures are more akin to the year 2007, ending the previous trend of escalating community protests. Figure 1 illustrates the increased frequency with which community protests have occurred, and the subsequent decrease in protests:



⁴ Note: For 2011, data is only available from January through May.

As Figure 2 demonstrates, monthly protest figures show the upward trend in the frequency of community protests⁵ followed by the downward trend beginning in mid-2010:



July 2009 and March 2010 featured unprecedented levels of protest (with 37 and 38 protests, respectively)⁶. These spikes in protest activity have had a substantial impact on the large increase in protest figures during 2009 and early 2010 (as illustrated in Figure 1). This upward trend ended in June 2010 as the frequency of protests fell dramatically. This change in trend coincided with the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in June 2010⁷. The second half of 2010 experienced the

⁵ Data begins in February 2007. Also, only limited data was available for December 2009 and September 2010.

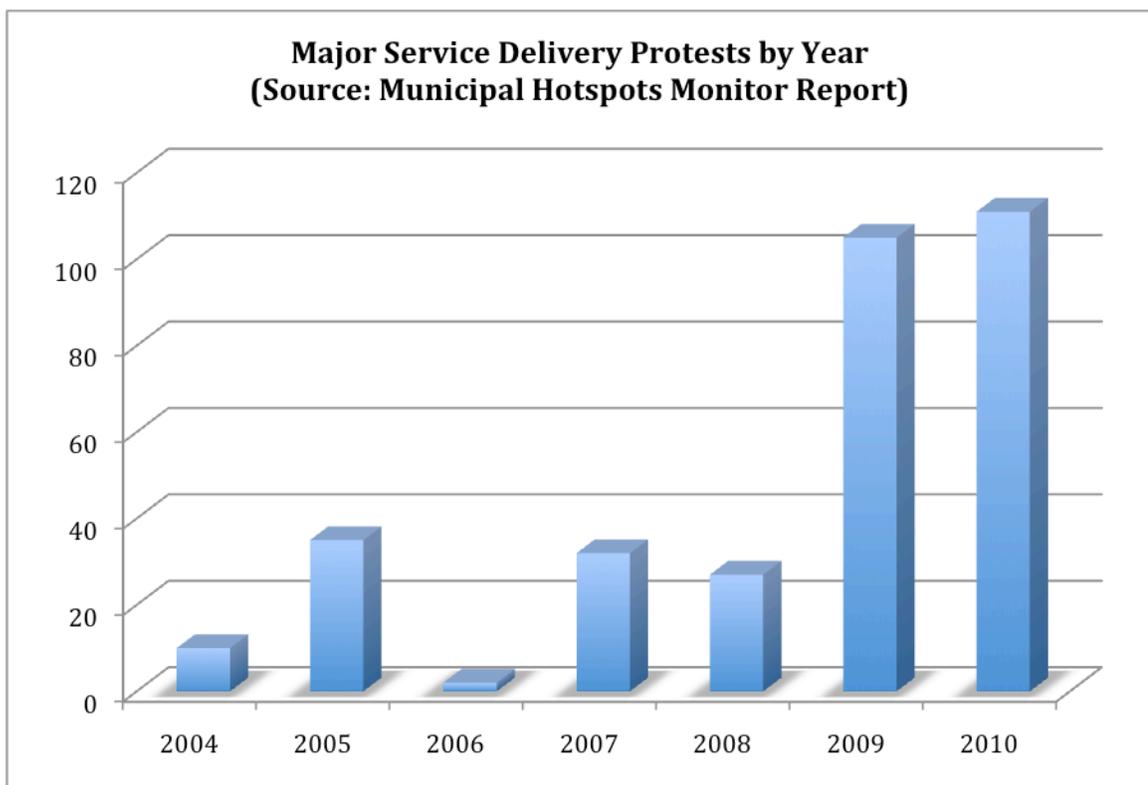
⁶ These months will be examined in more detail starting on page 12 of this report.

⁷ Some commentators have attributed the unusually low number of protests occurring in June 2010 to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. They suggest that holiday periods often feature lower levels of protest than normal, a factor which helps explain why June 2010 featured lower levels of protest activity than June (generally a relatively protest-heavy month) has in previous years. Whether this explanation is persuasive is debatable. After all, given that one of the motivating factors of protesters is to attract attention to their grievances, it would seem that the FIFA World Cup would provide an unparalleled opportunity for publicity. In fact, in the months leading up to the tournament, protesters across the country regularly threatened to engage in heightened levels of protest activity during the Cup if their grievances were not addressed. Ultimately, however, regardless of whether the World Cup provided an incentive for or dissuaded protests, June featured an unusually low level of protest activity.

fewest amount of service delivery protests since the second half of 2007. In fact, the second half of 2010 (July through December) experienced fewer incidents of community protests than any other six-month period in the dataset, with only **35** protests in total. Since mid-2010, South African communities have experienced relative calm from civil unrest.

Municipal IQ Statistics:

The initial rise in community protests has been documented by other organizations as well. Municipal IQ reported that 105 “major” service delivery protests took place during 2009, a figure that was roughly equivalent to the total previous five years combined (106 protests).



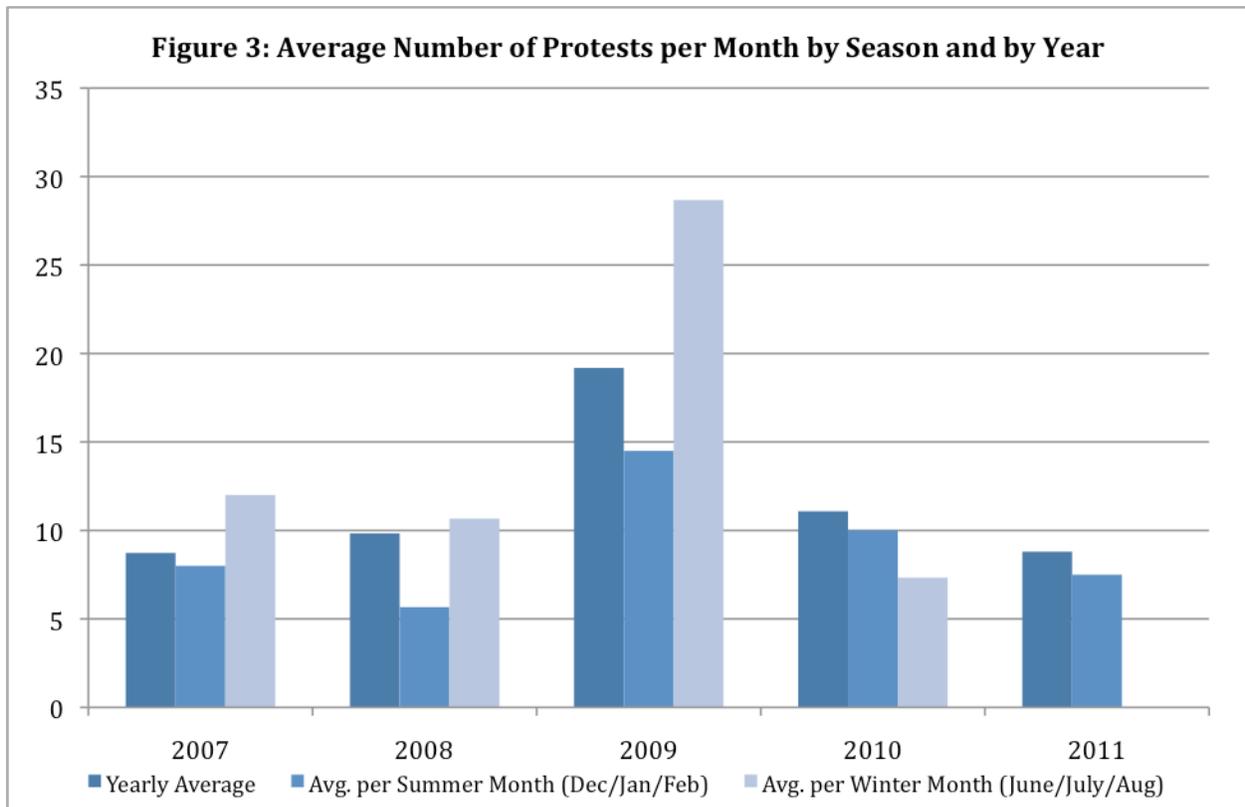
Although Municipal IQ reports a continuing annual rise in “major” protests, they do note the dramatic reduction in community protests beginning in the second-half of 2010. Municipal IQ found that early trends in 2010 suggested that the year had the potential to match 2009’s heightened figures, with **83** protests already through the Q2 of 2010. Ultimately the rising

incidence of community protests ended beginning in June 2010, with only **28** protests for the remainder of the year. Municipal IQ notes that 2011 continues to be a relatively quiet year, confirming the conclusion that communities have remained relatively subdued from June 2010 to the present.

B. The Seasonal Fluctuation of Protests

The data suggests that the winter months (June, July, August) of a given year generally yield higher rates of protest than the average per month for that year, while the summer months (December, January, February) of a given year typically yield lower rates of protest than the average per month for that year. The average number of protests per month in 2007 was **8.73**, while the winter months featured a significantly higher protest rate, at **12** protests per month. In 2008, the average number of protests per month was **9.83**, with the winter months featuring the higher rate of **10.67** protests per month, and the summer of 2008 featured the much lower rate of **5.67** protests per month. The average number of protests per month in 2009 was **17.75**, with the winter months featuring **28.67** per month, and the summer of 2009 featuring **10.33** per month. This pattern reversed itself in 2010 as the average number of protests per month over the year stood at **11.08**, while the winter season of 2010 featured just **7.33** protests per month. This is likely the result of the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in the winter of 2010 being utilized as a period of celebration rather than an opportunity for publicized protest. Municipal IQ has also suggested the World Cup conformed to the tendency of fewer community protests during holiday periods. The year 2010 was unusual with the average number of protests per month during the summer months standing at **10.00**, being higher than the average number of protests per month during the winter months **7.33**. Data is not yet available to determine if 2011 will sustain this change in trend. Figure 3 illustrates the extent to which protests are more frequent during the

winter months and less frequent during the summer months with 2010 being an exception.



Similarly, Municipal IQ has consistently found that “winter is typically prone to more protests”. There are several (potentially mutually reinforcing) explanations for the greater unrest in winter months. First, the increased need for electricity and power during the colder winter months makes residents more likely to protest electricity shortages, which occur regularly across South Africa.⁸ Second, the damage caused by winter storms and subsequent instances of flooding may contribute to community unrest. Of the 5 instances between 2007 and 2010 where

⁸ A comparison of the frequency with which protesters cited electricity shortages as a grievance during summer and winter protests, however, did not yield findings that support this conclusion. The data indicated that protesters were just as likely to demand electrification, protest increases in electricity rates and express discontent about the disruption of their (often illegal) electricity connections during the winter months as the summer months. Nevertheless, the greater need for electricity during the winter months still may be at least a contributing factor in the increased levels of protest during this season.

participants cited flooding as motivating a particular protest, all occurred during the winter months. Third, the winter weather may amplify concerns residents have about the absence of adequate housing⁹. Fourth, the South African Local Government Research Centre has found that during the winter, heavy rainfall washes pollution from urban areas, significantly undermining the quality of coastal water. The deterioration of water quality in communities along False Bay or the Atlantic Coasts, for instance, has regularly contributed to unrest in these areas. Whatever the particular source, the ANC's Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Deputy Minister, Yunus Carrim, has suggested that "with the onset of winter, people's lives become more intolerable and their frustrations deepen"¹⁰, a phenomenon which often manifests itself in higher levels of protest.

C. The Increasing Violence of Protests

A Note on Methodology:

Violent protests have been defined in this report as those protests where some of the participants have engaged in physical acts that either cause immediate harm to some person, or are substantially likely to result in such harm. Thus, in addition to the more obvious indications of a violent protest (the intentional injuring of the police, foreigners, government officials, etc., the burning down of houses or other structures, the looting of shops), instances where rocks are thrown at passing motorists, tires are burned to blockade roads, and other similar acts have been included as a violent protest. Conversely, instances of protesters organizing marches to the

⁹ Lending support to this conclusion is the fact that during the winters of 2007, 2008 and 2009 there were a total of 46 protests where protesters explicitly cited housing as one of their chief concerns, while there were only 21 such protests during the following summers. This discrepancy may be partially attributable to the increased number of protests during winter months (thus making it more likely that some of the protests were related to housing). However, it can just as easily be said that the increased number of protests during the winter is at least partially a consequence of greater concerns about housing felt during that time, which manifests itself in the form of increased numbers of protests. Moreover, while just 24.41 % of protests during the summer are motivated by housing grievances, 31.94% during the winter are the result of concerns over housing, lending credence to the notion that the cold winter weather is a driver of protest activity.

¹⁰ This quote is taken from a speech delivered at the University of Witwatersrand, 20 August 2009.

homes of municipal managers, handing over memoranda detailing lists of grievances, or peacefully assembling in public areas are designated as nonviolent protests. In instances where protesters have made violent threats “We will make the municipality ungovernable if our demands are not met within 7 days!”, yet have not actually engaged in potentially violent acts, the protests are deemed to be nonviolent.

Admittedly, this methodology is far from perfect. It inevitably requires subjective assessments as to whether particular acts constitute violence (such as minor, yet intentional damage to a police vehicle.) It also fails to account for what proportion of the participants at a given protest engaged in violent acts, a piece of information often difficult to extract from brief media reports on particular protests. Nevertheless, the regularity with which protests become violent can be as insightful an indicator of discontent as the frequency of protests.

Furthermore, labeling a protest as violent fails to distinguish between those protests that were initially violent, from those that became violent after aggressive responses by police¹¹ (such as needlessly firing rubber bullets or tear gas into a crowd to disperse an otherwise peaceful demonstration.) The death of Andries Tatane in Ficksburg is a tragic example of chaos ensuing when a seemingly peaceful protest is met with an aggressive police response. Tatane, a schoolteacher and community leader participated in a demonstration to the Setsoto Municipal offices concerning the community’s service delivery grievances. The media has reported that Tatane was beaten and apparently shot by police officers after asking them not to use water

¹¹ The University of Johannesburg’s Centre for Sociological Research has argued that heavy-handed, violent interventions by police officers often incite violence at community protests. The Centre noted in July and August 2009, peaceful protests held in townships in the Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces were met with police randomly opening fire at protesters and, in certain instances, firing at assembled groups of people who were not involved in the protests at all.

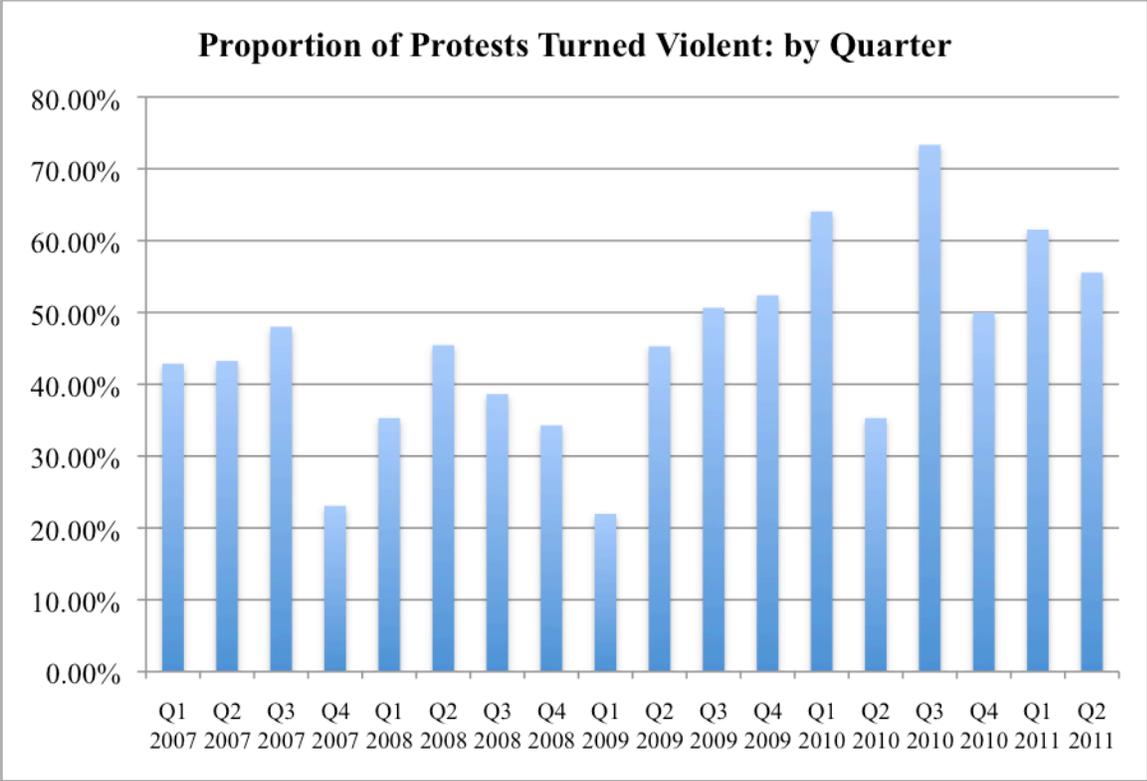
canons to disperse elderly bystanders¹². For the consistency of our analysis we have classified the Ficksburg protest as violent, although responsibility for the initial violence appears to fall on law enforcement.

Arranging the data into larger or smaller periods of time can impact the trends the data appears to support. Considering that certain months contained as few as 2 or 3 protests, and given the aforementioned qualifications involved in categorizing particular protests as “violent”, we have arranged the data into quarterly periods (First Quarter 2007, Second Quarter 2007, etc.) so as to increase the sample size and provide a more meaningful illustration of trends than a monthly comparison might indicate. Moreover, our decision was influenced by the fact that other organizations, such as Municipal IQ, arrange their data quarterly as well.

Our Findings:

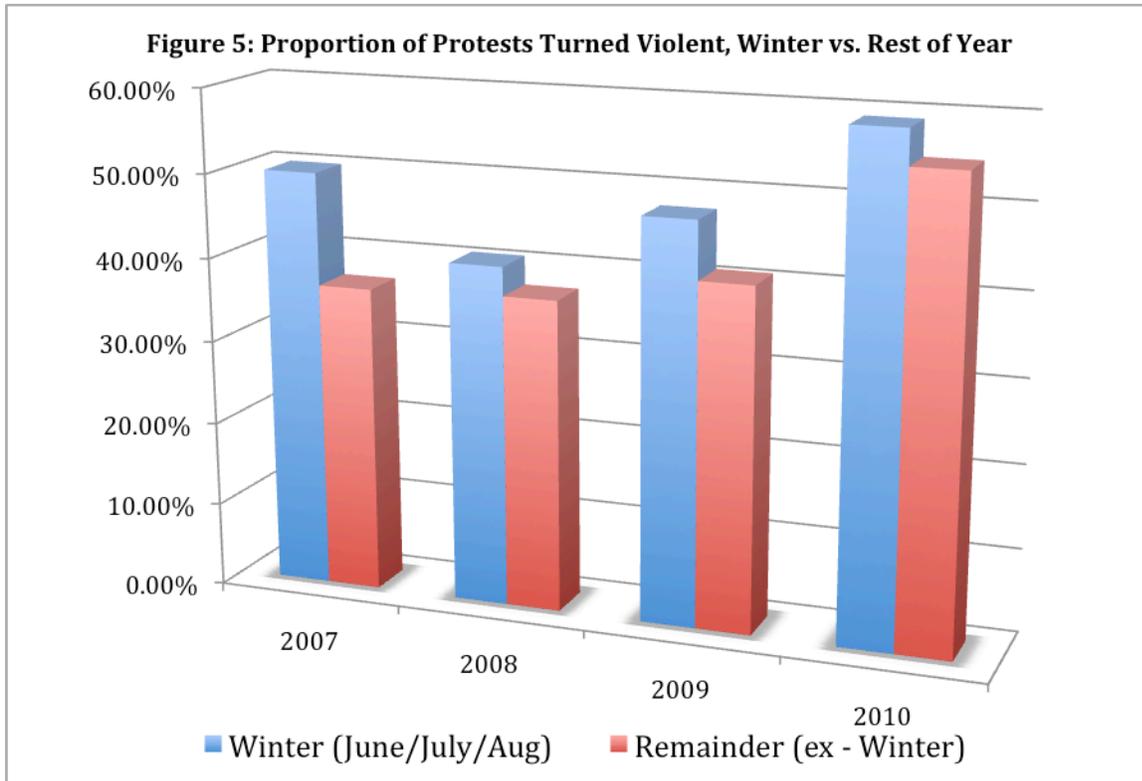
During 2007, approximately **41.66%** of protests were violent, including a high of 48% in the 3rd quarter and a low of 23.08% in the 4th quarter. In 2008, approximately **38.13%** of protests were violent, with a high of 45.45% in the 2nd quarter and a low of 34.28% in the 4th quarter. During the 2009, approximately **44.16%** of protests were violent, with a high of 52.38% in the 4th quarter and a low of 21.95% in the 1st quarter. In 2010, approximately **55.64%** of protests were violent, containing a high of 73.33% in the 3rd quarter, and a low of 35.29% in the 2nd quarter. Thus far in 2011, **59.09%** of protests have been violent, with a high of 61.54% in the 1st quarter and 55.56% in the 2nd quarter. Figure 4 illustrates the rising trend of increasingly violent protests.

¹² Reported in: The Citizen “Tatane’s Death Was A Hit” 17 April 2011; The Citizen “Ficksburg Erupts in Mob Violence” 15 April 2011



Despite the reduced frequency of community protests beginning in June 2010, an increasing proportion of community protests have become violent. Figure 4 indicates that the proportion of protests that were violent remained relatively constant from 2007 – 2009. This occurred despite the spike in protests during 2009, illustrated in Figure 1. Beginning in mid-2009 there was a noticeable shift in the proportion of protests that turned violent. In the 3rd quarter of 2009, the 4th quarter of 2009 and the 1st quarter of 2010, **50.65 %**, **52.38%** and **64.06%** of the protests, respectively, were violent, representing the three highest quarterly figures since 2007. Moreover, while only **36.86%** of protests taking place between February 2007 and March 2009 were violent, **53.00%** of protests taking place during or after April 2009 were violent. The notion that the frequency of protests and the violence of protests are positively correlated is challenged by the fact that October 2010 (with only 6 protests) experienced one of the highest rates of

protester violence at **83.33%**. Although the outbreak of community protests remains subdued in 2011, in only one month has the proportion of violent protests remained below 50%. In March 2011, 7 of the 11 protests, or **63.64%**, involved violence; in May 2011, 5 of the 7 protests, or **71.43%**, were violent. Finally, the data supports the notion that protests that take place during the winter months are more likely than other months to be violent. Figure 5 illustrates:

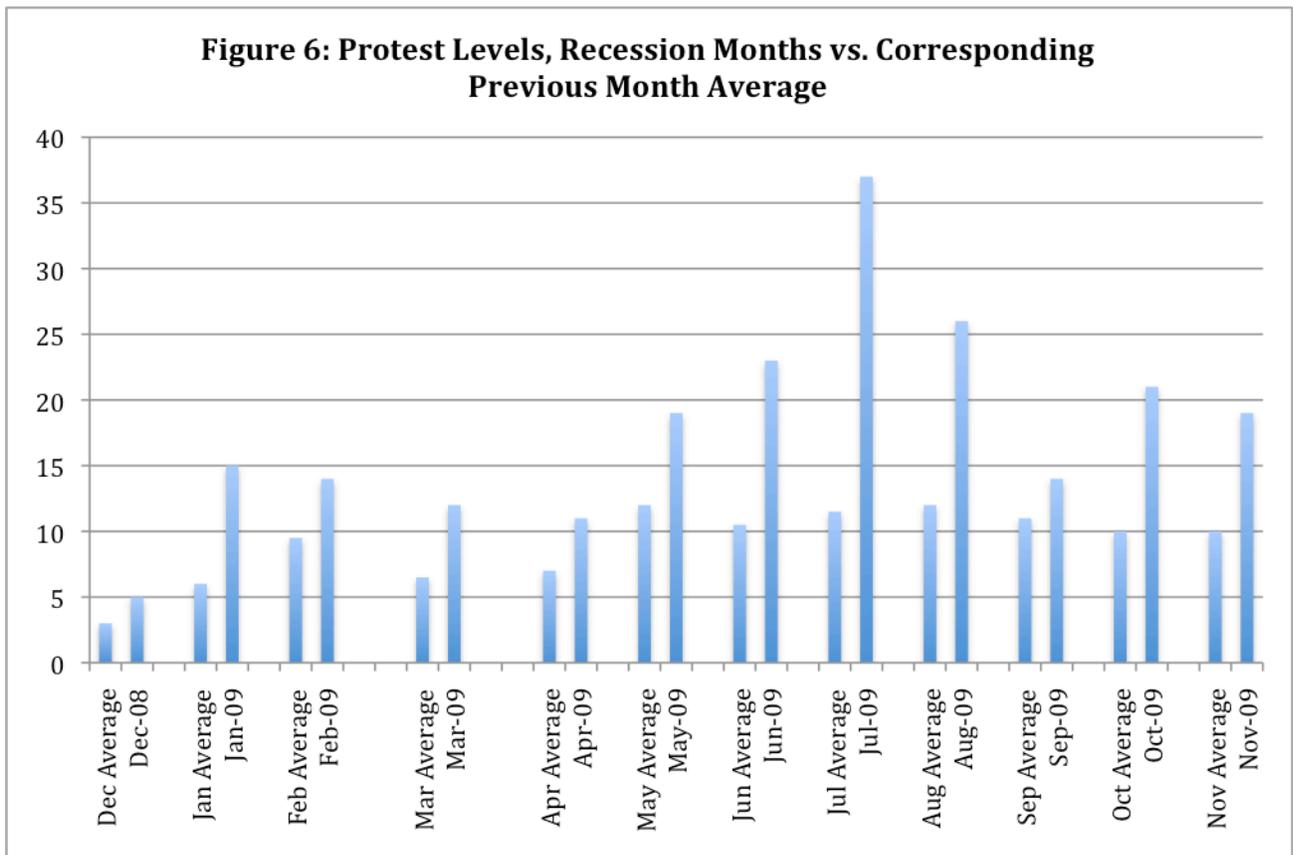


These findings demonstrate that the positive correlation between the frequency and the violence of protests has diminished. While the frequency of protests has significantly fallen, the increasingly violent nature of community protests continues its upward trend.

D. The Recession: December 2008 – November 2009

Given that the global financial crisis and the subsequent economic recession likely hampered the ability of local governments to adequately provide residents with basic services, and independently contributed a negative effect on the financial security of community members

(unemployment, reduced savings etc.), it is likely that the difficult economic climate impacted the frequency of community protests. The spike in the number of protests taking place between December 2008 and November 2009 supports this claim. The number of protests taking place during these months universally exceeded, often by wide margins, the average figures for similar months in previous years. Figure 6 documents the disparities in the amount of average monthly protests between 2007-2008, and the months during the economic recession:



The months during the recession consistently featured higher levels of protest activity than did similar months in previous years. In fact, **35.76%** of the community protests documented between February 2007 and May 2011 took place between December 2008 and November 2009, a twelve-month period. Upon seeing rising levels of protest in the middle of 2009, Municipal IQ similarly suggested that the pain caused by the recession was likely one of

the chief contributors to the unrest.¹³ Community protests continue to be relatively limited thus far in 2011, likely reflecting the improvements in government finances and economic security.

E. Increased levels of Xenophobia

The extent to which foreigners or their property have been targeted during service delivery protests are difficult to objectively measure. While the occurrence of a protest itself or the use of violent force during a protest are fairly overt acts, determining whether foreigners were specifically targeted during protests is harder to gauge. Even in those instances where the property of foreigners has been targeted, it is difficult to say that the destruction had a xenophobic motivation, as indiscriminate destruction of property is often a regular part of such expressions of unrest. For instance, following a community protest in Balfour in Mpumalanga on July 20, 2009, Pakistani shop owners who had their stores looted and vandalized claimed that they did not think that they were targeted because they were outsiders. Nevertheless, despite an inability to precisely measure trends in xenophobic attacks during community protests, it appears that xenophobic attacks are becoming somewhat more common. During documented service delivery protests taking place between February 2007 and January 2009, there were only 2 instances of protesters definitively expressing and violently acting upon xenophobic sentiments. Since then, however, there have been 7 instances where foreigners have been subject to violent attacks or had their shops burned or looted during service delivery protests. One of the protester's claims during a July 2009 protest is telling,

¹³ In addition, a glance back at Figure 4 indicates that this trend holds true for the levels of violence as well, though to a lesser extent. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarters of 2009 all exhibited noticeably higher rates of violence than did those quarters in previous years. Admittedly, this trend does not hold true for the 1st quarter of 2009, which exhibited lower rates of violence than did its counterparts in previous years. This can potentially be explained by the fact that the economic impact of the collapse of financial institutions may be a lagging indicator. Ultimately, however, these explanations may only partially mitigate the discrepancy, meaning that the relationship between the recession and rates of violence may not be nearly as strong as the relationship between the economic climate and the number of protests themselves.

People from the Free State are taking our work. And the foreigners are taking our business here. We are burning their shops because we know it will get the municipality's attention. We are African! They must force foreigners out.

The occurrence of such xenophobic sentiments is a consequence of competition for scarce resources. TNS Research Surveys, conducting a February 2010 study of 2,000 residents of South African metropolitan areas, found that high levels of dissatisfaction with service delivery was a “xenophobia powder keg”, driving hatred toward foreigners. Moreover, TNS found that the fact that many foreigners will accept lower wages out of desperation during periods of chronic unemployment (a consequence partly of the economic recession) further drives xenophobic violence. Finally, the fact that there is little transparency in the allocation of housing in South African municipalities results in violent xenophobic episodes. Given the scarce availability of housing, foreigners who are able to attain houses are rumored to have improperly attained it by bribing government officials, a sentiment that further drives violence towards the state and foreigners¹⁴.

F. Size of Protests

Given that most media reports failed to include information about the size of community protests and those that did often relied on inexact estimates, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions about changes in the size of protests over time, or whether the size of protests were influenced by the increasing rate of violent protest. Even accurate estimates about the number of people present at a protest can imperfectly distinguish between those that are participating, from those that were merely present. Thus, our examination of the relative sizes of protests hesitates to draw any strong conclusions from the data.

An analysis of the proportion of protests that were “large protests” (defined as more than

¹⁴ This is especially significant given that housing concerns are one of the primary drivers of civil unrest, a phenomenon that discussed in more detail later in the paper.

100 participants) yields no firm conclusions, but does suggest a preliminary trend of increasingly large protests. In 2007, roughly **26%** of protests were large protests, while in 2008 and 2009 roughly **32%** were large protests. In 2010, approximately **38%** of protests were large protests, and thus far in 2011 **43%** of protests have been large protests. Given the aforementioned reservations about inferring too much significance from these findings and the fact that there were often gross discrepancies between “large protests” (some protests featured as few as 100 participants, while some featured as many as several thousand), there is evidence indicating a positive correlation between the size of protests and the increasing propensity for violence. Additional sample data is needed before a firm conclusion supporting the increasing size of community protests can be established.

II. The Geographical Concentration of Protests

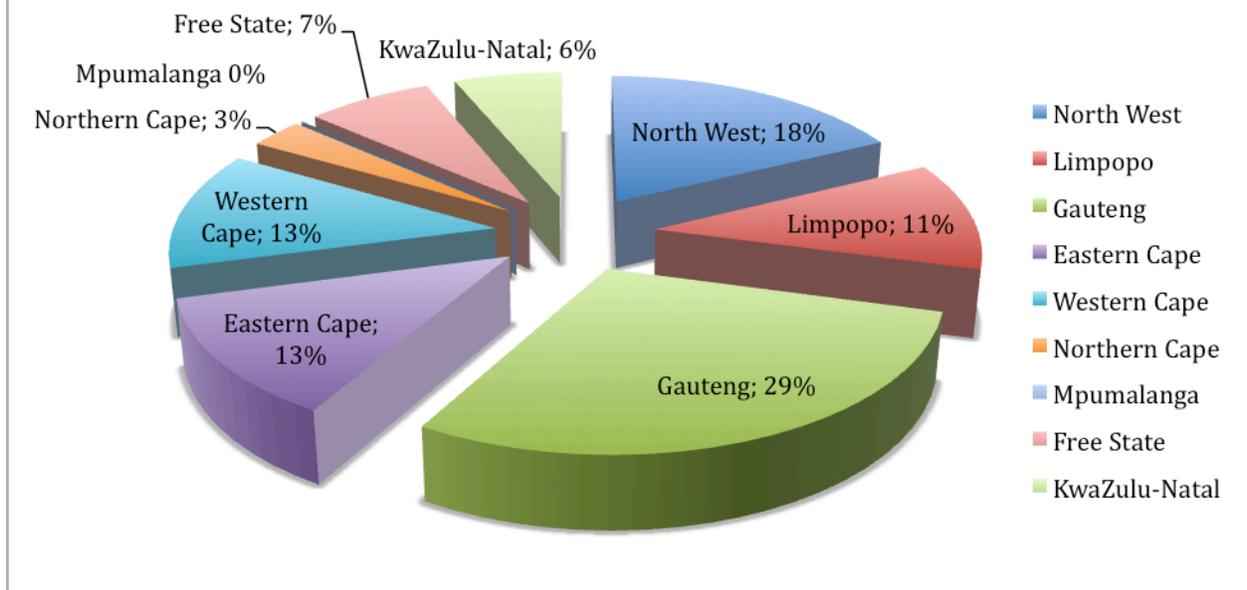
A. 2007

Gauteng Province accounted for **29.17%** of protests across the country during 2007.¹⁵ The North West Province was a common site of unrest as well, accounting for **17.71%** of community protests. The Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces accounted for **12.50%** of protests each; Limpopo followed closely behind featuring **11.46%** of protest activity. Free State accounted for **7.29%** of the country’s protests, Kwazulu-Natal accounted for **6.25%**, and the Northern Cape featured **3.13%** of South Africa’s protests. There were no reported protests in Mpumalanga in 2007.¹⁶

¹⁵ Data included from February to December 2007.

¹⁶ This finding was particularly surprising. Any province free of service delivery protests would seem anomalous, but what makes this result even more puzzling is a 2007 TNS Survey indicating that Mpumalanga was the province whose residents expressed the greatest level of dissatisfaction with service delivery, with 35% of respondents reporting that they were extremely dissatisfied and 14% reporting that they were fairly dissatisfied. Given the explosions in protest activity in Mpumalanga in subsequent years and our inability to identify what prompted the

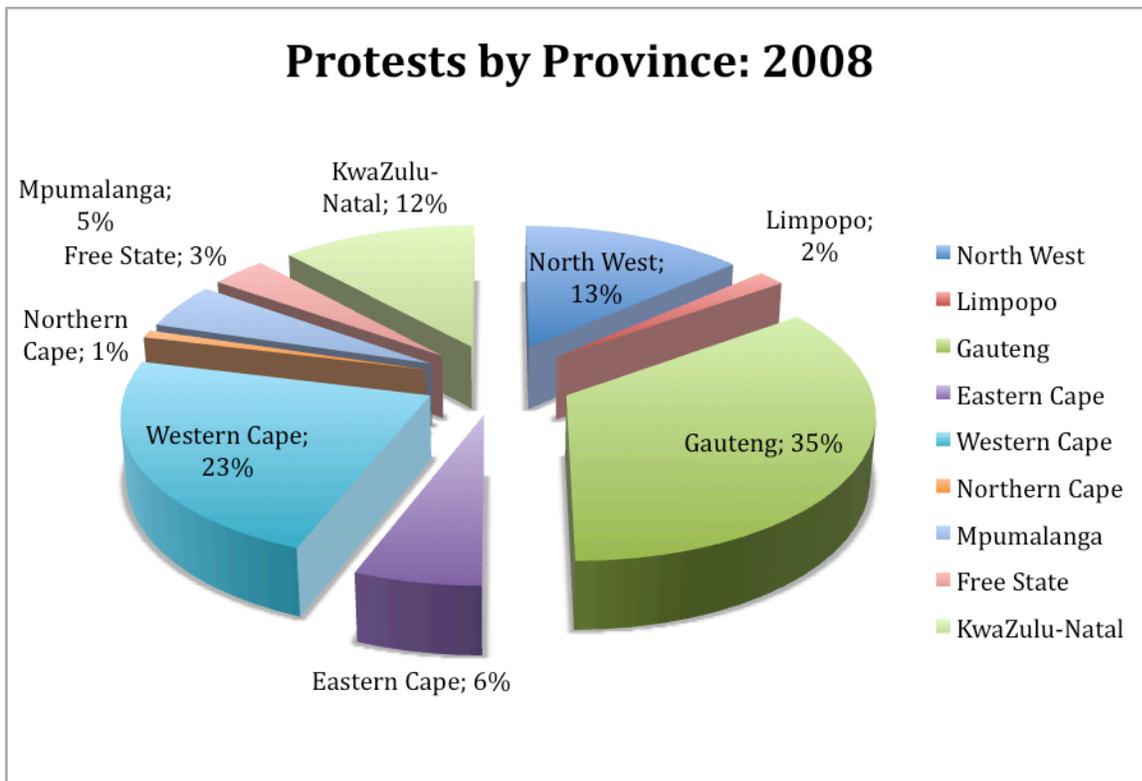
Protests by Province: 2007



outburst, this result becomes even more difficult to explain. Our best guess is that the Briefer Briefings publication, which had just began launching its Community Protest Monitor in 2007, was not entirely comprehensive, thus impacting the validity of some of the protest data.

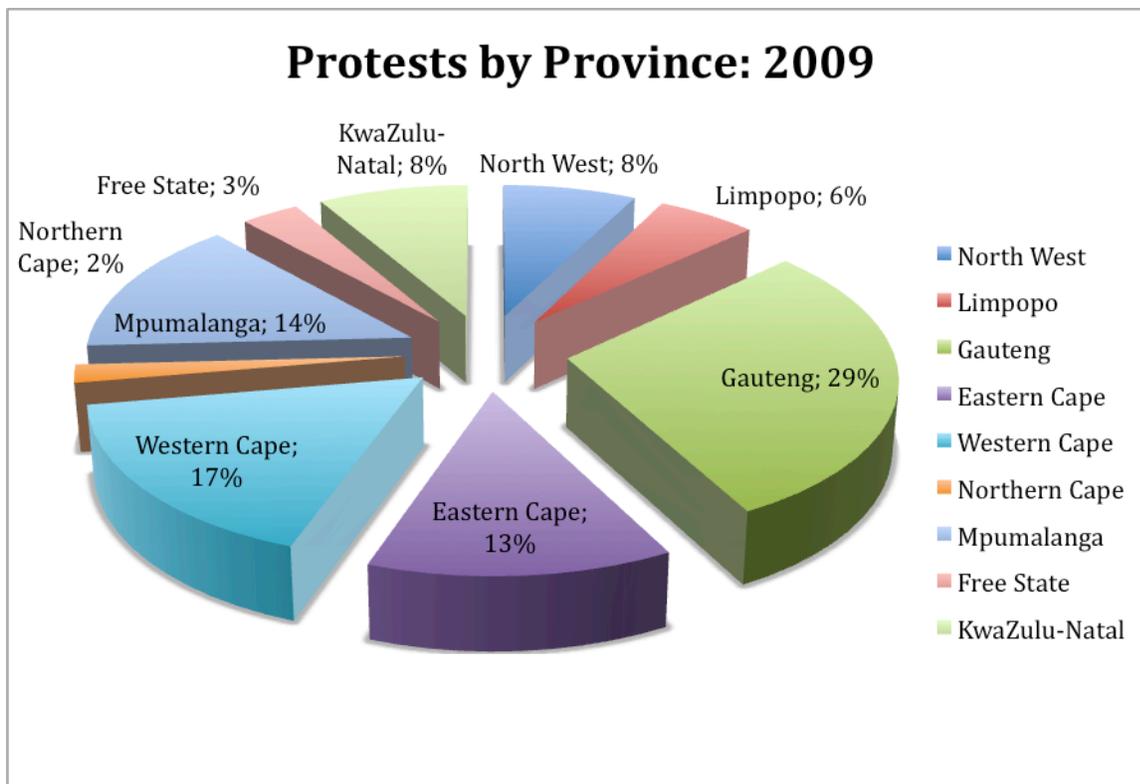
B. 2008

In 2008, the Gauteng Province continued to be a major source of protest activity, accounting for **34.75%** of protests, a moderate increase from the previous year. The Western Cape became a more frequent contributor to protest activity, accounting for **22.88%** of protests across the country. The North West Province continued to be a common site of protests, featuring **13.56%** of the nation's protests. Kwazulu-Natal accounted for **11.86%** of the nation's protests, while the Eastern Cape accounted for **5.93%** and Mpumalanga featured **5.08%** of the country's protests. Free State, Limpopo and the Northern Cape were relatively minor contributors to the nation's protests, accounting for **3.39%**, **1.69%**, and **0.84%**, respectively.



C. 2009¹⁷

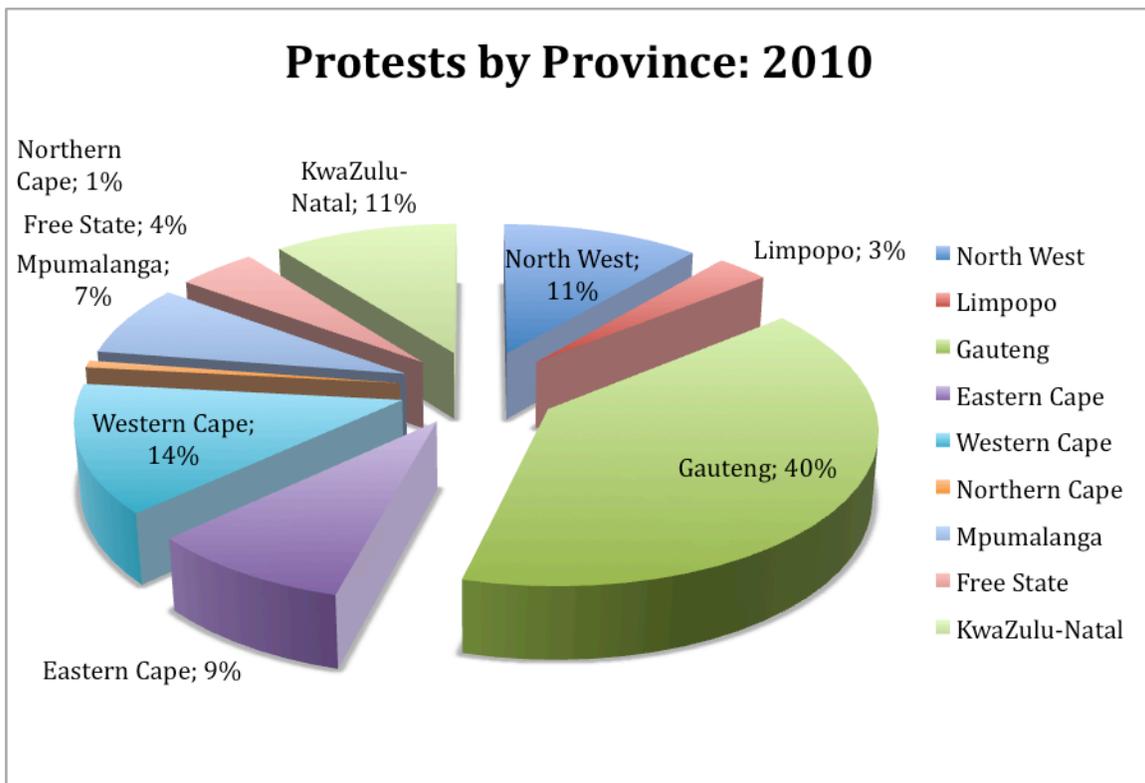
In 2009, Gauteng continued to be the most common site for protests, accounting for **29.11%** of the nation's total, while the Western Cape was the next most frequent contributor, featuring **16.90%** of the country's protests. The Mpumalanga Province, which just two years ago did not feature a single documented service delivery protest, accounted for **14.08%** of South Africa's protests. The Eastern Cape featured **13.15%** of the nation's protests, while Kwazulu-Natal featured **8.45%**, and the North West Province featured **7.51%**. Limpopo, Free State, and the Northern Cape accounted for **5.63%**, **3.29%** and **1.88%** of the country's protests, respectively.



¹⁷ Only limited data was available for December 2009.

D. 2010¹⁸

In 2010, Gauteng continued to be the major source of protest activity, accounting for **39.85%** of the nation's protests. The Western Cape accounted for **13.53%** of South Africa's protests while the North West Province featured **11.28%** of the country's protests. Kwazulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, and Mpumalanga featured **10.53%**, **9.02%**, and **7.52%** respectively. Free State, Limpopo, and the Northern Cape were minor contributors to protest activity, featuring **4.51%**, **3.01%**, and **0.75%** of the protests, respectively.



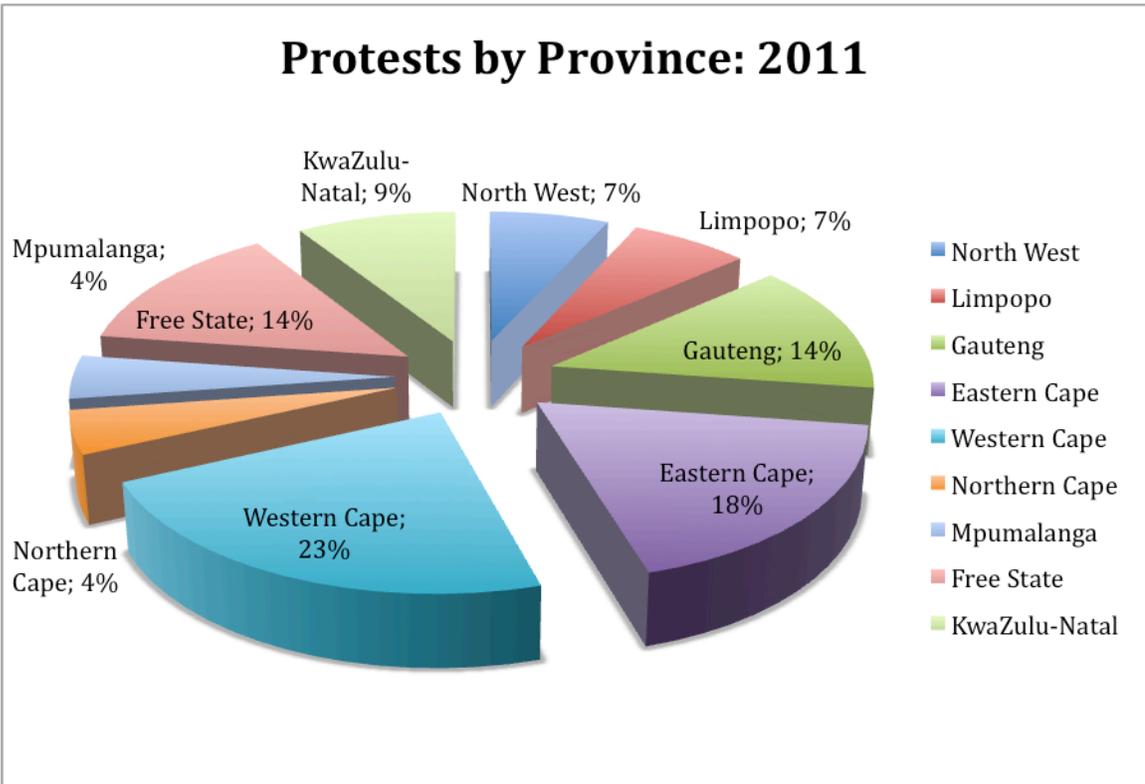
E. Year to Date 2011¹⁹

For the first time, the Western Cape featured the greatest amount of community protests, accounting for **22.73%** of South Africa's total. This outcome results from a dramatic **89%** fall in

¹⁸ Only limited data available for September 2010.

¹⁹ Data included January through May 2011.

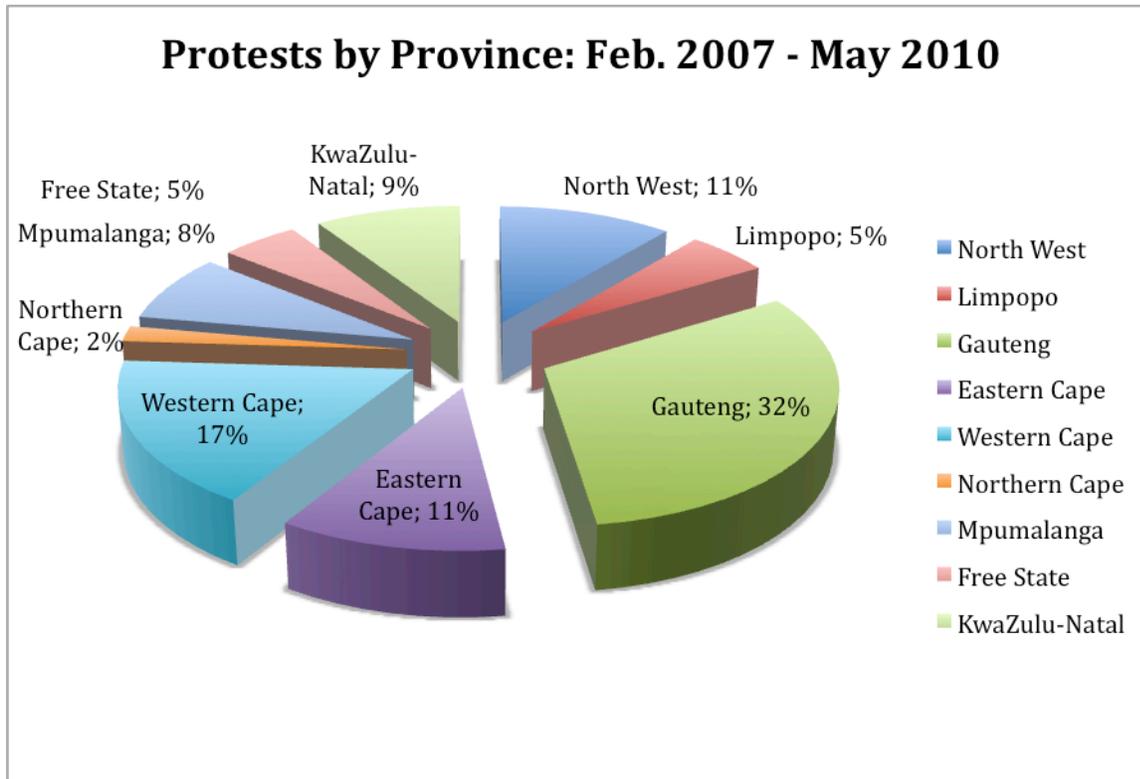
the number of protests in Gauteng, rather than an increase in the frequency of protests in the Western Cape. The Eastern Cape followed with **18.18%** of South Africa’s protests. With only 6 protests this year (from 53 the preceding year), Gauteng accounts for **13.64%** of the nation’s protests. The Free State featured **13.64%** of the country’s protests, while Kwazulu-Natal and the North West Province featured **9.09%** and **6.82%** respectively. Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the Northern Cape were minor contributors to protest activity, featuring **6.82%**, **4.55%**, and **4.6%** of the protests, respectively.



F. Aggregate Distribution of Protests by Geography (Feb. 2007 – May 2011)

Between February 2007 and May 2011, Gauteng accounted for **31.46%** of the protests in South Africa. The Western Cape accounted for **17.05%** of such protests, while the North West Province accounted for **11.09%**. The Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Mpumalanga

contributed **11.09%**, **9.27%** and **7.95%**, respectively. Limpopo, Free State, and the Northern Cape were relatively minor contributors, accounting for **5.30%**, **4.97%** and **1.82%** protests across the country. The figure below illustrates:



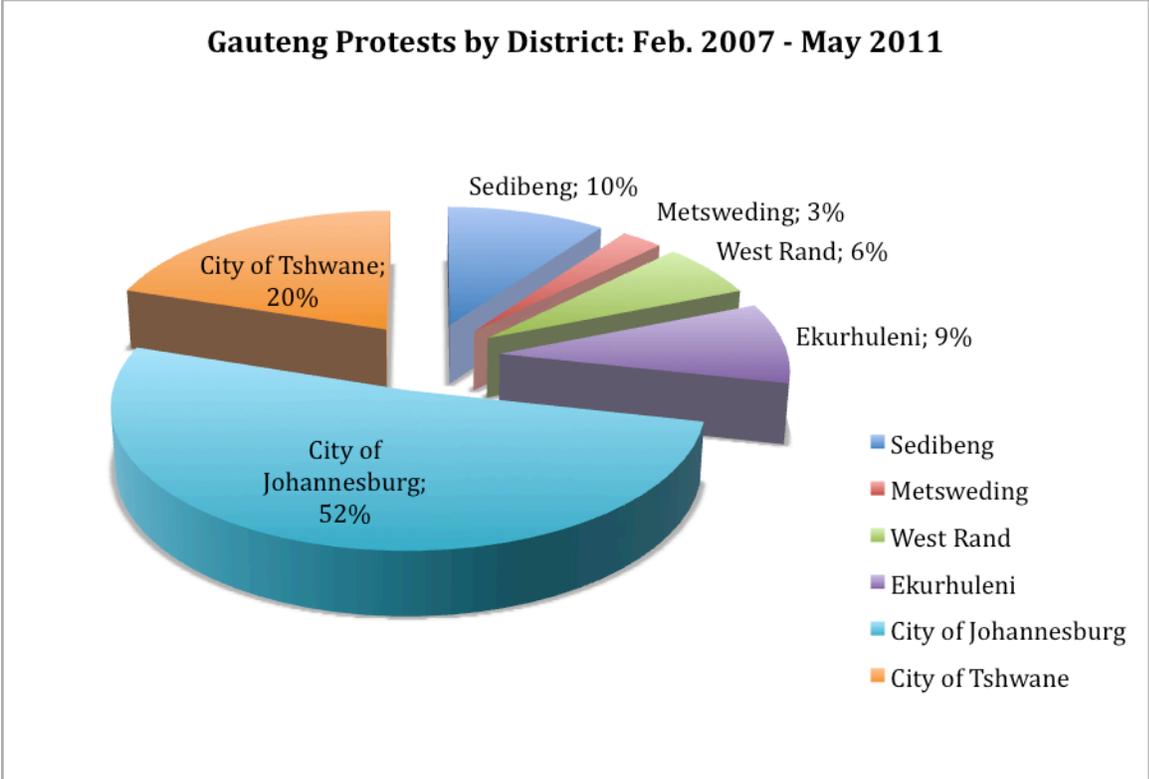
G. Closer Look at the Provinces

1. Gauteng

Gauteng as the predominant site of community protests in South Africa helps explain, at least partially, the phenomenon of community unrest. Municipal IQ has suggested that Gauteng's striking contribution to the number of community protests nationwide demonstrates that the protests are largely an urban phenomenon, resulting from the *relative* deprivation members of a community feel when compared to their more affluent neighbors.²⁰ In other words, Municipal IQ

²⁰ Some commentators have suggested that community protests have actually become more common in communities that have experienced improved service delivery because while these communities were previously on the fringes of South Africa and thus did not see the state as a realistic contributor to their welfare, the heightened expectations that came with initial improvements in service delivery often resulted in disappointment when meaningful improvements

suggests that communities are more likely to protest when they are “languishing at the periphery of municipalities”, a phenomenon that is most common in metropolitan areas. An examination of the districts within Gauteng where protests are most common supports this claim.

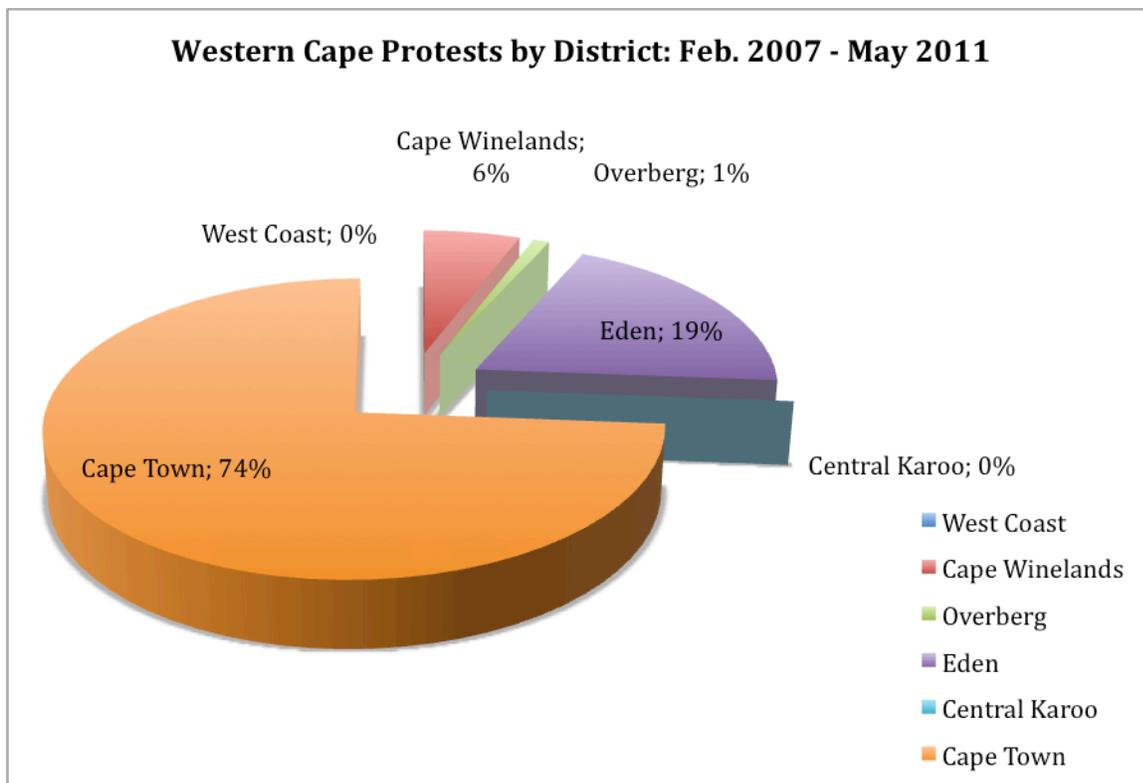


The disproportionate number of protests occurring in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality is immediately apparent. The City of Tshwane, another metropolitan municipality, also features far more instances of protest than its less urban counterparts. Though this may result from other factors as well (a large population creating more opportunities for protest, the necessity of population density for meaningful displays of unrest, etc.) it does help substantiate the claim that metropolitan areas have a greater tendency toward community protests.

did not come quickly enough. This suggestion, that protests are just as much a consequence of expectations as absolute living conditions, helps explain why the most impoverished South African communities are not necessarily the most likely to the protest.

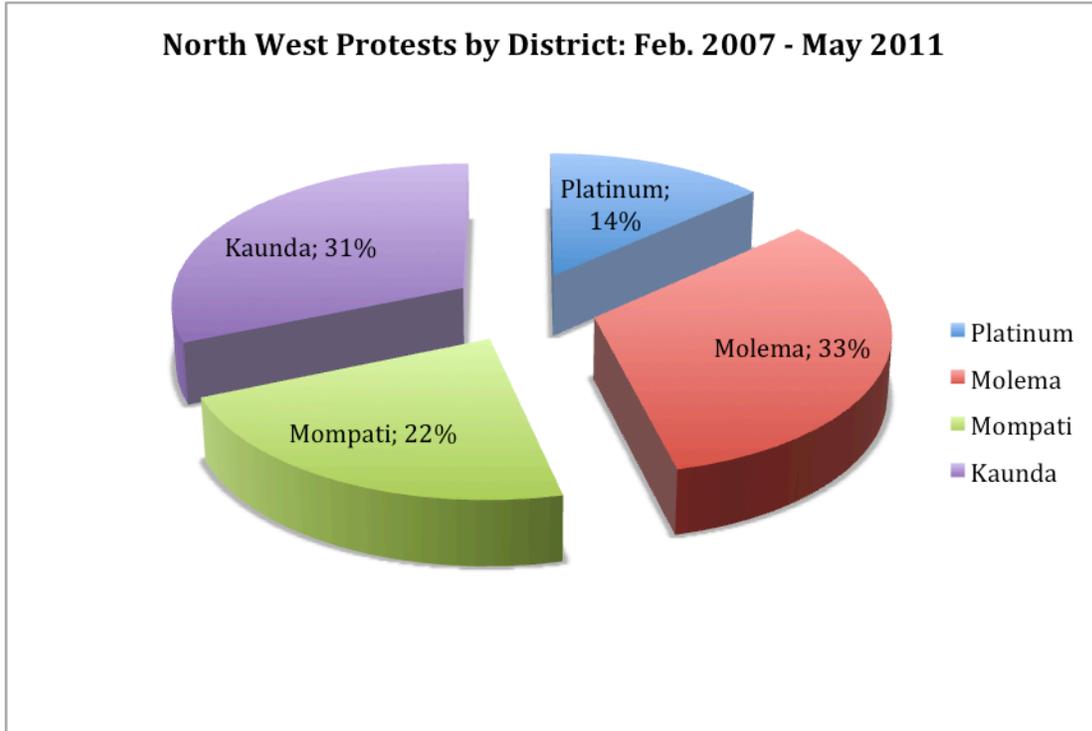
2. The Western Cape

An analysis of the distribution of protests in the Western Cape also indicates the extent to which protests are concentrated in urban areas. By far the largest contributor to protests in the province is the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality. Informal settlements on the outskirts of the city, in areas such as Khayelitsha, Nyanga and Philippi, are by far the largest contributors to protests in the municipality. Moreover, in the Eden District Municipality, protests hail almost entirely from townships on the outskirts of Plettenberg Bay and Mossel Bay.

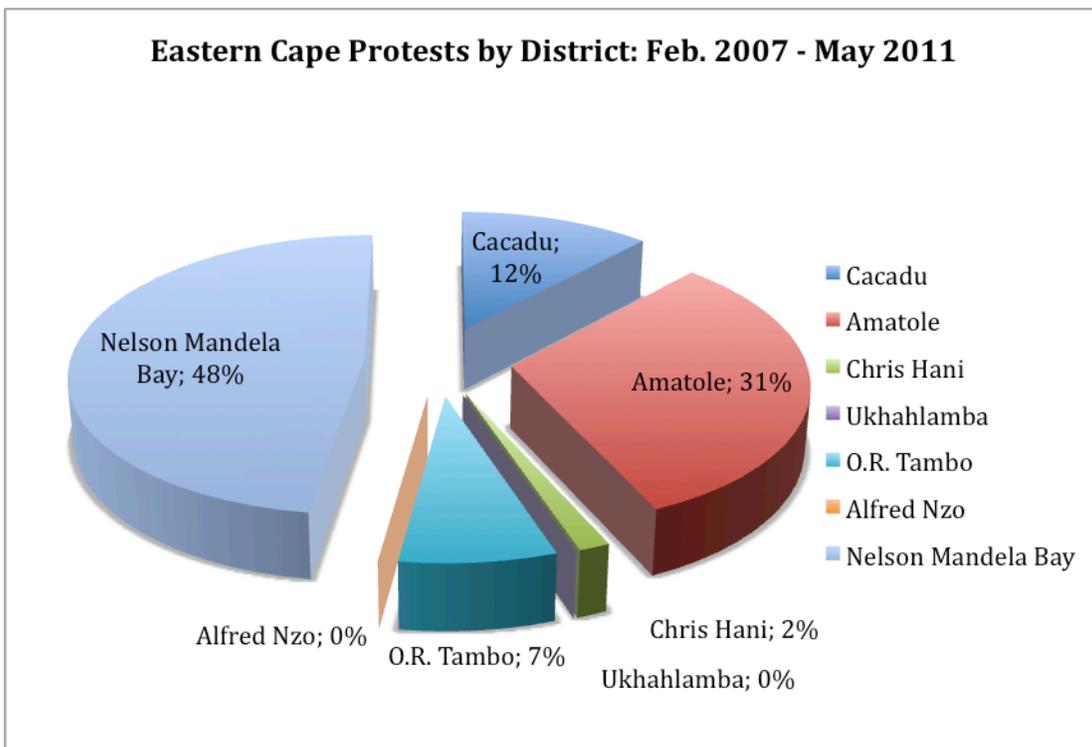


Given that the Western Cape and Gauteng Provinces together account for **49%** of the protests nationwide, the distribution of protests within these areas strongly supports the conclusion that informal settlements on the outskirts of urban areas are disproportionately likely to engage in protests.

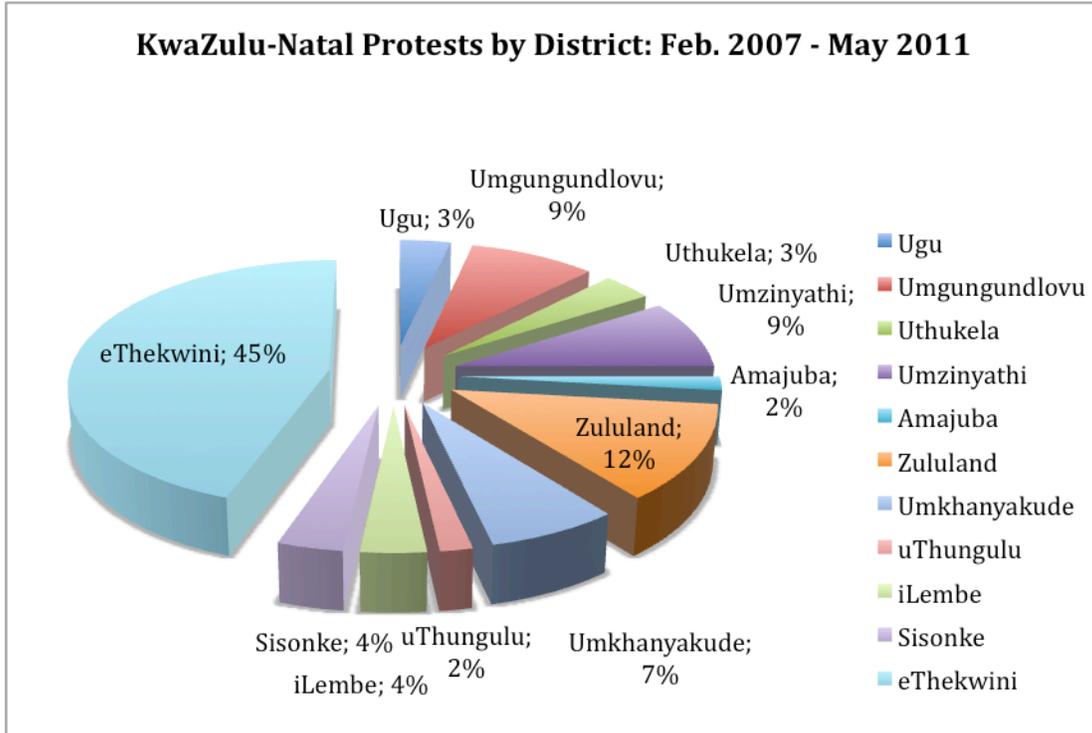
3. North West Province



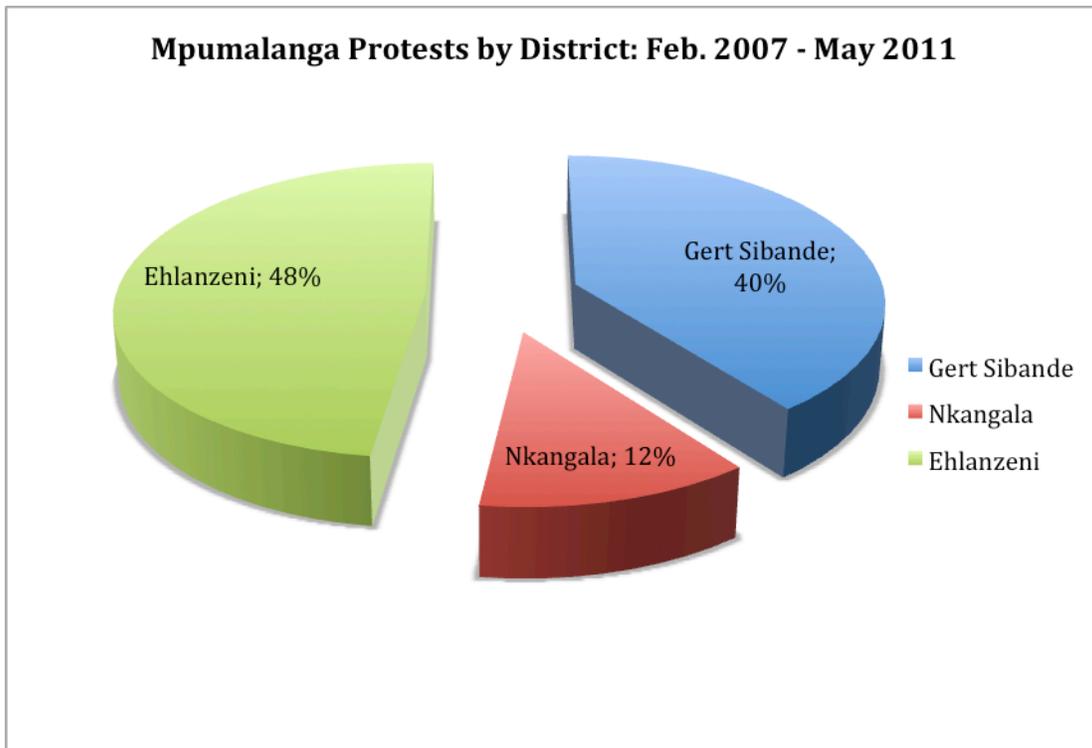
4. Eastern Cape



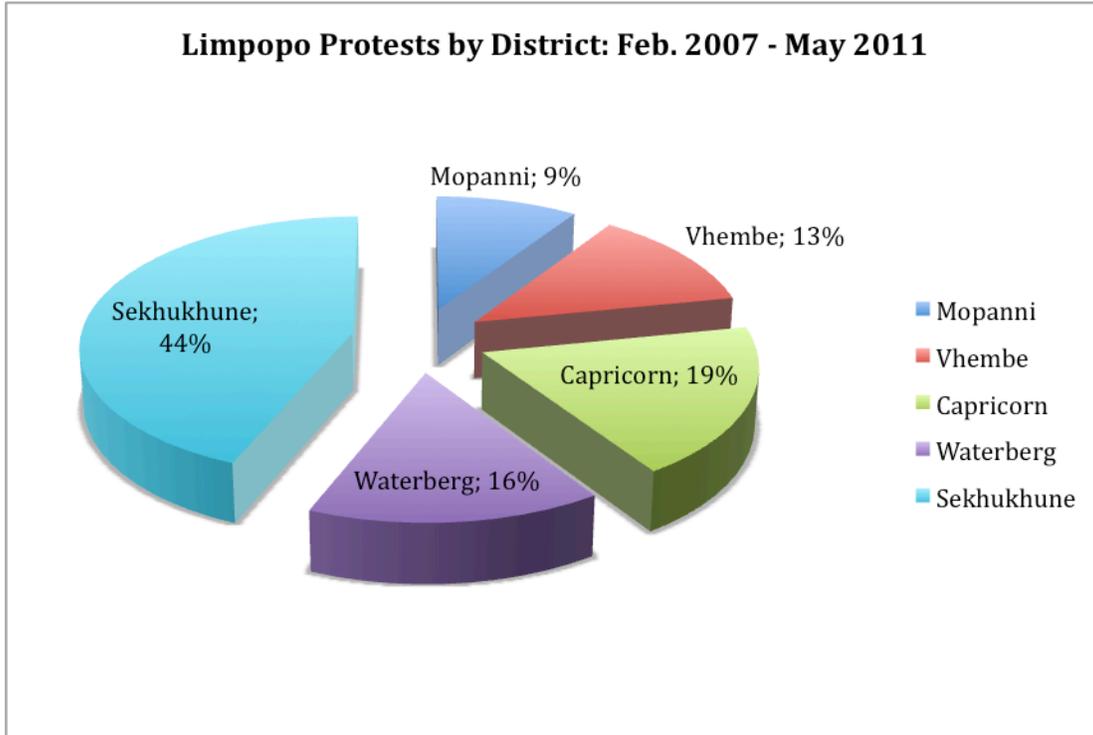
5. KwaZulu-Natal



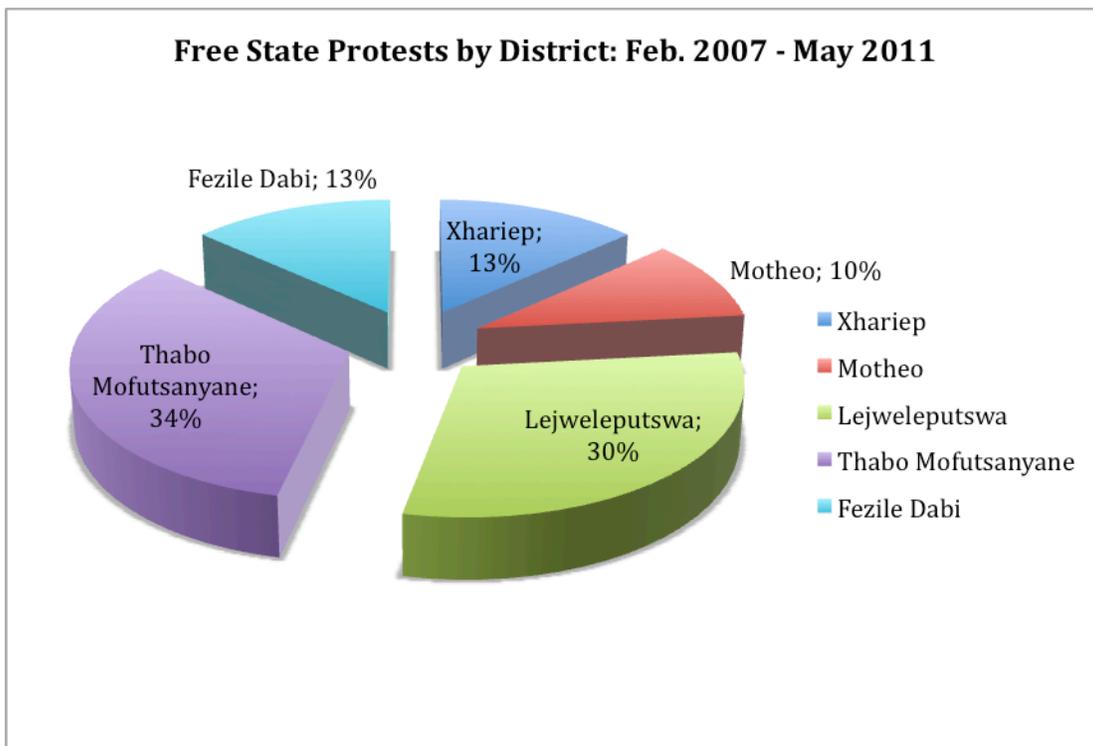
6. Mpumalanga



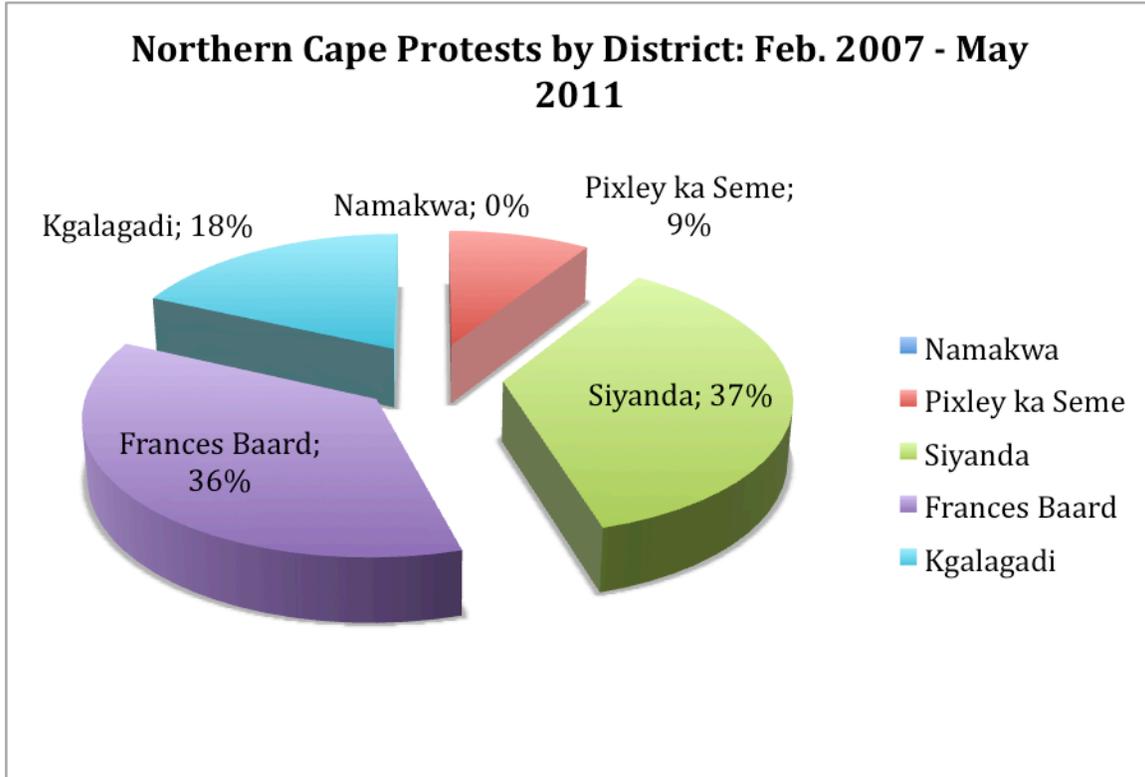
7. Limpopo



8. Free State



9. Northern Cape

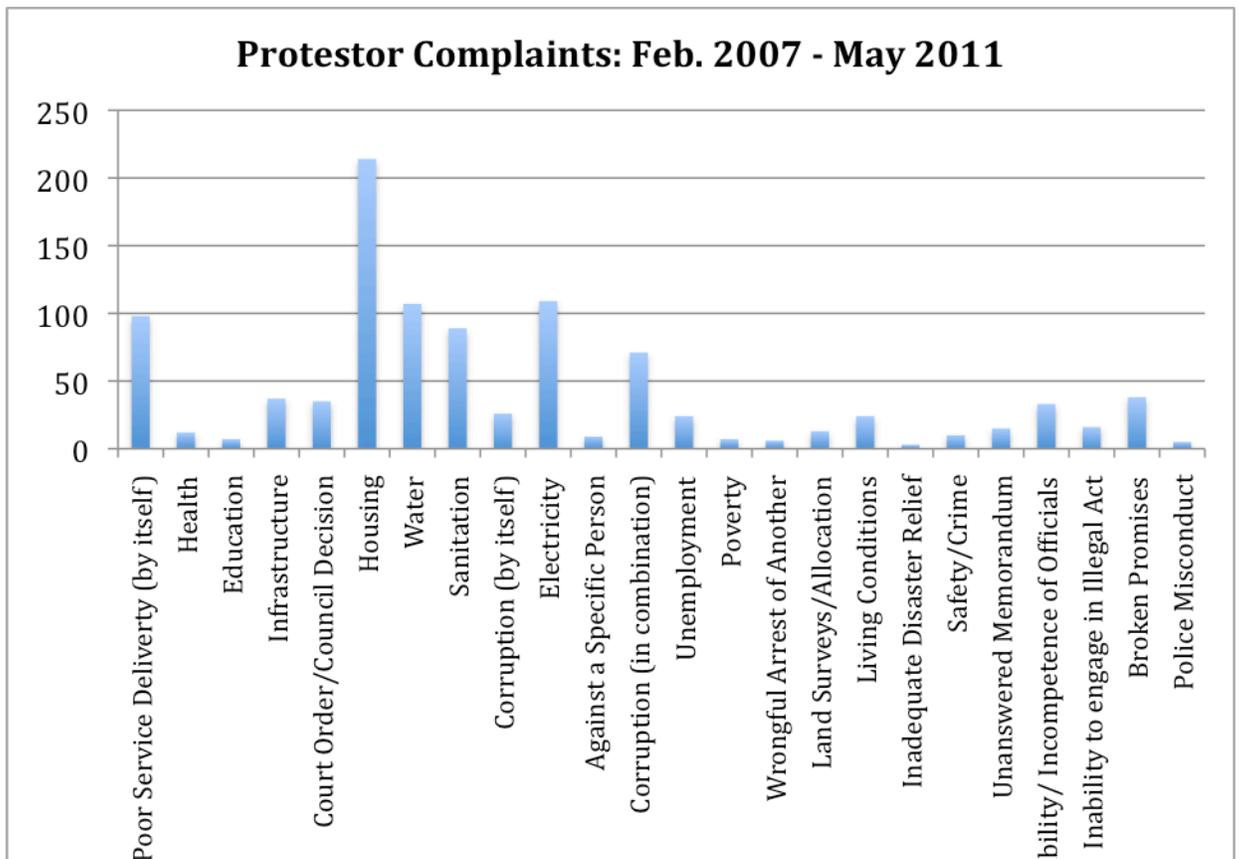


III. The Concerns Expressed by Protesters

The following chart²¹ illustrates the frequency with which participants in community protests expressed specific complaints, such that those grievances can be said to be one of the motivations for the protest having occurred. Of course, attempting to precisely identify what the motivation behind a particular protest might be is an imperfect science. Often times those writing media reports do not have the opportunity to engage with the protesters themselves, and must rely on their own evaluations of what is motivating the protesters in a particular instance. Even

²¹The vast majority of the categories featured in the chart are not mutually exclusive, that is, a protester demanding the provision of adequate water, housing and electricity (one of the most common combination of grievances expressed), would be documented as expressing all 3 of those concerns. In certain instances, however, certain categories are mutually exclusive, as is indicated by the phrase “by itself.” For instance, the category “Poor Service Delivery Generally (by itself)” refers to those instances where protesters cite poor service delivery as the motivation for a protest, yet do not cite grievances (such as the need for adequate housing) more specifically. Similarly, the category “Corruption (by itself)” covers those instances where protesters cite corruption or nepotism on the part of government officials yet fail to mention other concerns with specificity.

when opportunities for dialogue are available, reports on protests often feature only the perspective of a small number of those involved, individuals whose perspectives may or may not reflect the views of the group as a whole. Finally, as some local government officials have alleged, some protesters may invoke pretexts for engaging in acts of civil unrest, as a way of concealing political motivations. Nevertheless, an examination of the frequency with which protesters express certain complaints still provides insight into the nature of community protests as a whole.²² In particular, this exercise is critical in distinguishing between those protests in which residents rightfully expressed concerns about the failure of local government to fulfill its obligations, from those protests in which the grievances of residents do not fall under the legal mandate of local government.



²² The chart is based on the 604 documented community protests that took place in South Africa between the beginning of February 2007 and May 2011.

What is most striking is the regularity with which protesters expressed concerns about their housing. In 214 instances, or **21.23 %** of the time, protesters complained that they did not have access to affordable or adequate housing. These residents complained that the houses that they lived in were deficient, inadequate, or unfinished. Protesters often claimed they waited several years for the government to provide them with RDP housing to no avail. Following housing, the absence of access to clean water was a common grievance of protesters. In 107 instances, or in **10.62%** of protests, protesters complained about inaccessibility to clean water, often alleging that little had changed since 1994. An equally frequent concern of residents was electricity, arising in 109, or **10.81%** of protests. Protesters regularly complained that they had no available electricity, had to pay exorbitant rates for power, or had their (illegal) electricity connections dismantled by government officials. In addition, protesters often complained of inadequate sanitation systems, most commonly because of insufficient refuse collection and unsanitary toilet systems. These concerns arose in 89 instances, or **8.83%** of the time. A prime example is the “toilet saga” this year in Khayelitsha, which garnered significant media coverage and resulted in protests as large as 2,000 residents.

The aforementioned grievances were often invoked in conjunction with one another. When residents complained about one of these issues, they were likely to mention some or all of the other concerns as well. Moreover, these concerns were often accompanied by the claim that government officials were corrupt or were engaging in nepotism. For instance, many protesters expressing concerns about the state of their housing claimed that they would have accessed adequate housing were it not for the favoritism expressed by government officials toward their associates. The distrust of local government manifested in a number of other ways as well. In 26 instances, protesters cited corruption on the part of government officials as their sole grievance.

Similar allegations of corruption were accompanied by other grievances in 71 instances. Furthermore, protesters cited the incompetence or need to hold government officials accountable in 33 instances, and on 38 occasions claimed that state officials had broken their promises.

In a number of instances, however, protesters expressed concerns that fall outside the obligations of local government. For instance in 24 instances, protesters complained of unemployment, while in 7 instances they cited poverty as a grievance driving their protests. Moreover, on 16 occasions residents engaged in protests after they were prevented from engaging in illegal acts, such as utilizing illegal electricity connections or illegally occupying houses. Finally, 35 protests were at least partially motivated by recent court orders or council decisions where residents disagreed with the outcome. Clearly on many occasions the source of community protests was not simply the inability of local government to adequately provide services. Ultimately, however, though protesters may express grievances that do not fall under the mandate of local government, the phenomenon of increasingly violent community protests must be addressed.

IV. Conclusion: Larger Issues at Stake in Community Protests

Fundamentally, community protests are an expected consequence of systemic failures in the provision of basic services to the poverty-stricken members of South African society. Absent an ability to remedy these failures immediately, smaller measures that reduce the potential for outbursts of violence ought to be considered. This is especially critical since the anger generated during a violent protest often fuels further violent protests. Following Andries Tatane's death, his enraged supporters set fire to the library and the home affairs office.²³ A storeroom at the

²³ Reported in: The Citizen "Tatane's Death Was A Hit" 17 April 2011; The Citizen "Ficksburg Erupts in Mob Violence" 15 April 2011

municipal offices in Meqheleng Township was burned to the ground. Police used water cannons, rubber bullets, and tear gas to disperse the dangerous crowd.²⁴ Aggressive acts by law enforcement raise the likelihood that protester anger will spill over into additional violent protests.

Responses by political representatives must also be reevaluated. Following the outbursts of violence that began in early 2009, President Zuma began by condemning the acts,

[B]urning down libraries, torching people's houses, and looting spaza shops do not build a strong nation. It does not solve our legitimate problems. It is not a foundation upon which we can collectively build a bright future for our children.

President Zuma, however, simultaneously announced that he would make unannounced visits to troubled areas across the country to take a firsthand look at the inadequacy of particular service delivery systems. In August 2009, he visited Balfour, which was then engaged in a series of extremely violent, xenophobic, and fatal protests. Expectedly, several settlements across the country (such as the Sakhile township in Standerton and Rust-ter-vaal near Vereeniging) began engaging in acts of violence, asserting that they were unwilling to relent unless President Zuma came to address their concerns. An opportunity to meet with President Zuma seemingly incentivized additional communities to engage in protests.

Yet in other cases, visits from government officials have helped to quell ongoing community protests. In July 2009, a large protest of over 100 residents in Khayelitsha ended after a visit from Cape Town Mayor Dan Plato. This reprieve was only temporary, as community protests over the poor quality of housing resumed less than a month later.²⁵ Rather than relying on the sporadic arrival of government officials to consult with protesters, local government

²⁴ See above footnote 23

²⁵ The relationship between violent expressions of discontent by specific communities and local government official's subsequent attempts (or lack thereof) to address those particular concerns would provide be a good opportunity to evaluate how state responses to community protests do or do not incentivize violence.

officials must establish effective lines of communication with community groups. So long as communities perceive that they are only able to call attention to their condition through acts of violence and destruction, community protests will remain a common phenomenon. This is especially true considering the nation's history of using civil unrest to advance social and political objectives.

The elections that took place this May likely contributed to the sustained reduction in the frequency of community protests, by allowing residents an outlet for expressing their grievances through the ballot box. Government officials must remain cognizant that the electoral goodwill will eventually dissipate, while the potential for long-standing complaints to boil over into increasingly violent protests persists. Improving the effectiveness of dialogue with communities with respect to development issues and the delivery of services can assist in easing the alienation protesters often feel toward local government, reducing the perception that there are few outlets for public participation outside of violent uprisings. Moreover, it can reduce the perception that government officials are corrupt or somehow complicit in the withholding of services from their communities. In the end, however, solving a problem of this magnitude will take time and the sustained commitment of local government officials to engage with residents. The data suggests protest activity is likely to increase if communities believe government officials are neglecting the service delivery promises made during election campaigns.