

in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. **Workers' Rights**

The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people

Some sections in the Bill of Rights specifically refer to workers. Section 23 refers to labour relations and guarantees workers the right to fair labour practices, to form and join trade unions and to participate in

union activities and strikes. **Employers' Rights**

Likewise, employers have the right to form and join employers' organisations and to take part in their

activities. These groups have the right to organise, form federations and engage in collective bargaining. The right to strike is written into the Constitution, but the right of employers to lock out their workers is not expresslyincluded. However, the Labour Relations Act grants employers this right in certain situations.

The annual wage negotiation season, often referred to as 'strike season' is the period when wage negotiations take place across different sectors. This period has in the recent past been characterised by industrial action

increases granted in 2012, labour experts predicted difficult negotiations.

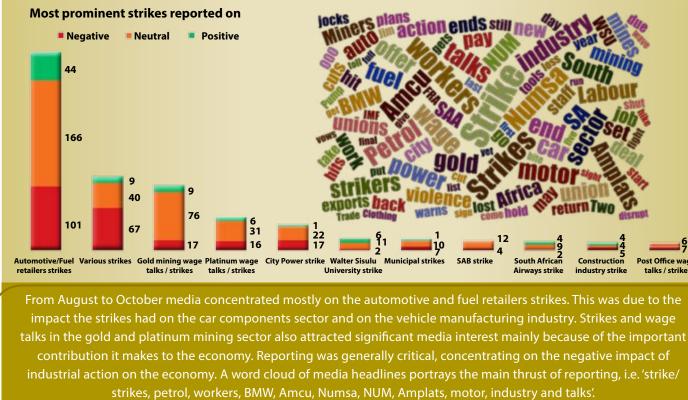
and work stoppages. Analysts differ about the timeframe, but strike

Strike Season

Local Media Coverage The 2013 strike season mainly affected the mining, construction and automobile sectors. Wage negotiations that culminated in strikes in most instances lasted much longer than the eventual strikes. Analysts quoted in the media noted some exceptionally high pay demands from competing unions, at a time when companies were struggling in a tough international environment.

Prominent issues as covered by media

Set against the backdrop of harsh economic times in the country and unions emboldened by hefty wage



incidents of violence and intimidation related to the strikes by petrol attendants and one death claimed to be related to this strike. During the strike at City Power in Johannesburg workers reportedly sabotaged the electricity supply in certain areas. Analysts hailed the fact that incidents of violence were sporadic and ascribed it to the fact that the labour relations system was able to manage conflict in the workplace. In other instances, media reported that employers resorted to the Labour Court for protection against violence and intimidation. Multi-year settlements were described as a stabilising factor in wage negotiations, with

experts noting that because of these settlements in some sectors, strike action was limited.

However, media noted that the 2013 strike season was not nearly as 'destructive' in terms of violence and intimidation as previous years. Reports on violence and intimidation were sporadic. Media reported on

Media also noted that a high number of wage settlements were reached in sectors without any form of industrial action. In these cases slightly higher than inflation increases of between seven and nine per cent were the norm. It was also reported that the Government, unions and business were preparing to meet at a planned year-end summit to discuss ways of minimising the collective damage caused by protracted strikes.

Despite early warnings that this might be a "hard fought" strike season, the overall media view was that in general all parties involved acted responsibly; engaging in protracted negations to avoid strikes where possible or to keep them as short as possible if unavoidable; and mostly steering clear of violence and

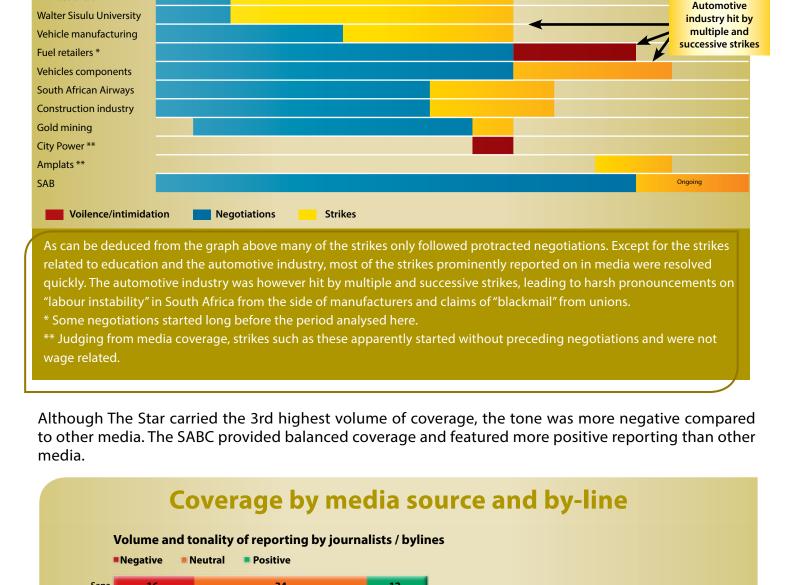
Duration of negotiations / strikes & indications of intimidation NEGOTIATIONS / STRIKES 09 Jul 16 Jul 23 Jul 30 Jul 6 Aug 13 Aug 20 Aug 27 Aug 3 Sep 10 Sep 17 Sep 24 Sep 1 Oct 8 Oct 15 Oct Municipal Coal mining sector Clothing industry South African Post Office **KZN** teachers

intimidation.

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Media furthermore reported on developments with regard to wage negotiations or strikes, quoting representatives of labour and business, including Government. In instances where media commented they described labour demands as being 'unrealistic' and suggested that workers tended to resort to strikes too readily. Unruly behaviour by striking workers drew extensive, prominent and negative reporting.



Penwell Dlamini 4 9 Volume and tonality of strike coverage by media source Neutral Positive Negative



Government maintained a strong share of voice through various spokespeople who articulated South African labour legislation, warned that jobs should be at the centre of the negotiations, urged parties to resolve their differences speedily and even intervened to help to resolve certain situations. The analysis of local and international media reporting showed that Government played an active role in mitigating the damage done to all parties as a result of strike action.

Labour

voice. A vast number of analysts, businesspeople and international stakeholders were quoted emphasising the damage done to the economy. In addition, they highlighted the potential damage to foreign direct investment, the country's reputation as a reliable export partner and the impact it could have on job creation. There was however also empathy with the difficulties faced by workers and the effect it had on them and their families. **In Summary**

government

Department:

communications

Despite the 44% share of voice enjoyed by labour, media was generally sympathetic to business, which only enjoyed a 26% share of

> unsecured loan industry was also singled out as a key contributing factor to the escalating wage demands of workers.

How business was

Incertaininstances commentators

criticised business for adopting

an adversarial stance during negotiations. This often resulted in

a stalemate and strike action. The

perceived in the

media

There was a discernable shift in sentiment during the period against worker demands, particularly given

the unrealistic expectations in the context of the global recession, as well as some of the tactics deployed.

Insight newsletter is produced by the GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research. This newsletter provides a snapshot of media reporting on the



2013 wage negotiation and strike season. It provides unique insight into the perceptions of media, as well as an understanding of government's implementation of policies and programmes.