

IF IT WASN'T FOR BLOGS,  
PODCASTS, AND TWITTER  
I'D NEVER KNOW WHAT'S  
GOING ON...



# CHANGING NEWSROOMS, SAME SELF-CENSORSHIP

Is it as bad as we think it is?



**MEDIA**MONITORING  
AFRICA



**OPEN SOCIETY**  
FOUNDATIONS

# AIMS

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- 1) How has social media and digital technology changed the newsroom landscape?
- 2) What are the challenges newsrooms are now facing?
- 3) Have these changes opened up opportunities for unintended shifts in the news agenda?

# METHODS

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- Desktop research
- Interviews
  - 3 newsrooms
- Media content analysis
  - Two specific events over seven-month period in 2015

# NEWSROOMS

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## NEWSROOM A

Digital unit within  
larger organisation

Publicly funded

Emphasis on 'accuracy'

## NEWSROOM B

Print and digital  
newspaper

Privately funded

Emphasis on  
'impact'

## NEWSROOM C

Digital newspaper

Independently funded

Emphasis on 'people'

# FINDINGS

All newsrooms use social media and digital tech (obviously)

- News gathering process
- Accelerated news cycle
- More “noise”
- Different forms of storytelling
- Merger of traditional roles
- Lose control over what is ‘sent’
- Impact on revenue generation

So much more information to sift through

Spread of misinformation

Less time to verify facts and sources

More responsibility per journalist

Invisible impact of digital platforms

# Impact of revenue generation

## NEWSROOM A

Publicly funded

“..money isn’t the issue. Our role is to inform..”

“The website is our priority. We will never be a social media first operation..”

## NEWSROOM B

Privately funded

“..technology isn’t the constraint. Resources are..”

“What will get the most likes? Retweets? Shares?”

## NEWSROOM C

Independently funded

“funding has freed us from some of the other editorial constraints”

“the audience want to engage in the way they want to engage”

Emphasis placed on social media and digital technology



# DATA ANALYSIS

- Same seven-month period: May–August 2015
- 20 South African media

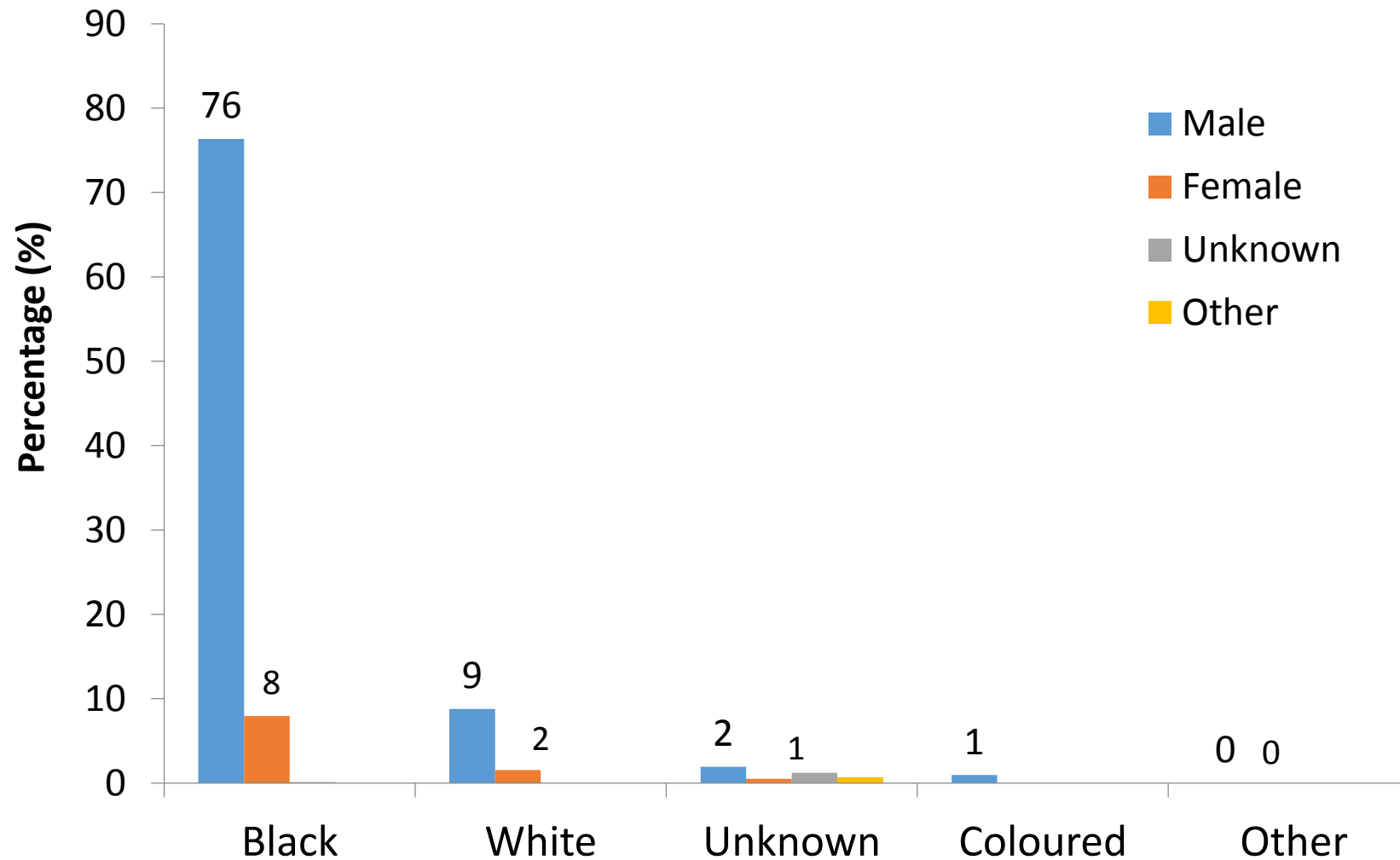
MARIKANA COMMISSION OF INQUIRY	XENOPHOBIA ATTACKS IN 2015
417 number of articles	459 number of articles
1571 quotes in total	1854 quotes
Average of 3.76 quotes per article	Average of 4.03 quotes per article



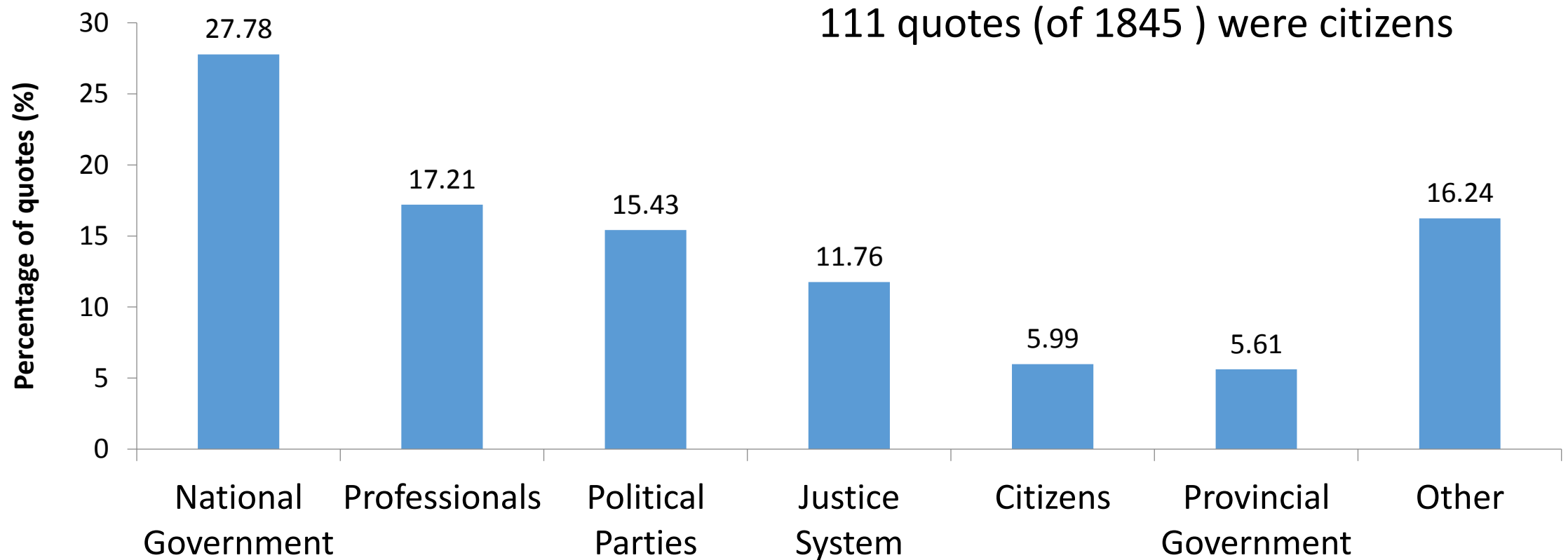
# Marikana Commission: Sources



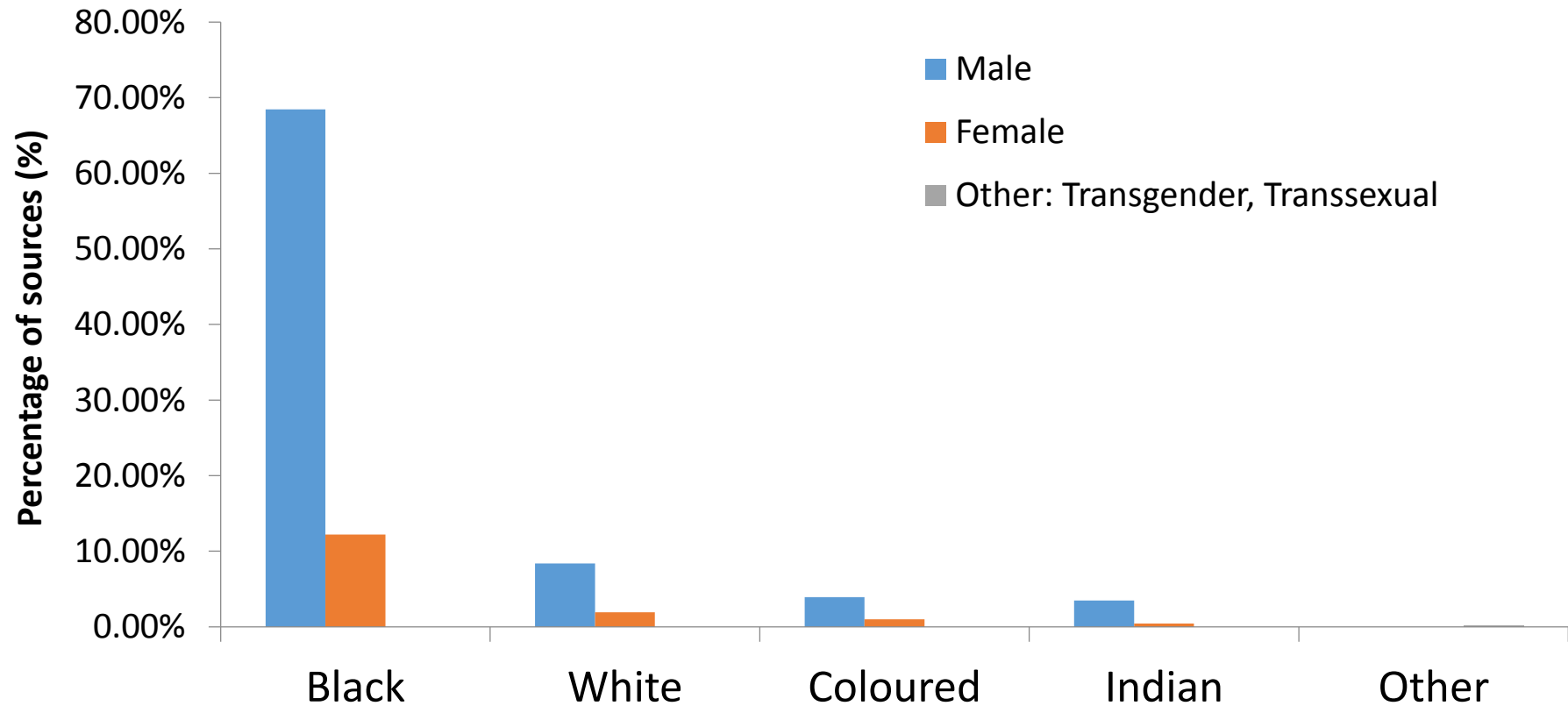
# Marikana Commission: Sources (cont.)



# Xenophobia: Sources



# Xenophobia: Sources (cont.)



# WHAT DO WE SEE?

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Increasing number of sources per article = GOOD

**BUT**

still dominated by voices of elite and powerful:  
political parties, government, men

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHIFTS

## Similar pressures to old newsrooms:

- 1) Editorial policies: 'Accuracy' vs. 'breaking stories'
- 2) Funding:
  - Newsroom A: public funding - susceptible to political influence
  - Newsroom B: private funding - susceptible to commercial and social
  - Newsroom C: independent funding - susceptible to social

## Different pressures:

- 1) Audience now have a say in news they want:
  - immediacy, quicker turn-around
  - Social media shaping the agenda?
- 2) Invisible gatekeeper: digital platform and their algorithms shape how and when news is received by the consumer

# FINAL THOUGHTS

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Technology offers extreme value to newsrooms

Need to be aware of some of the setbacks it offers (e.g. social media dependency)

Many issues are perpetuated in this new system  
- could reflect the higher systemic level  
transformation is required

# FINAL THOUGHTS

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Full report to be released soon

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