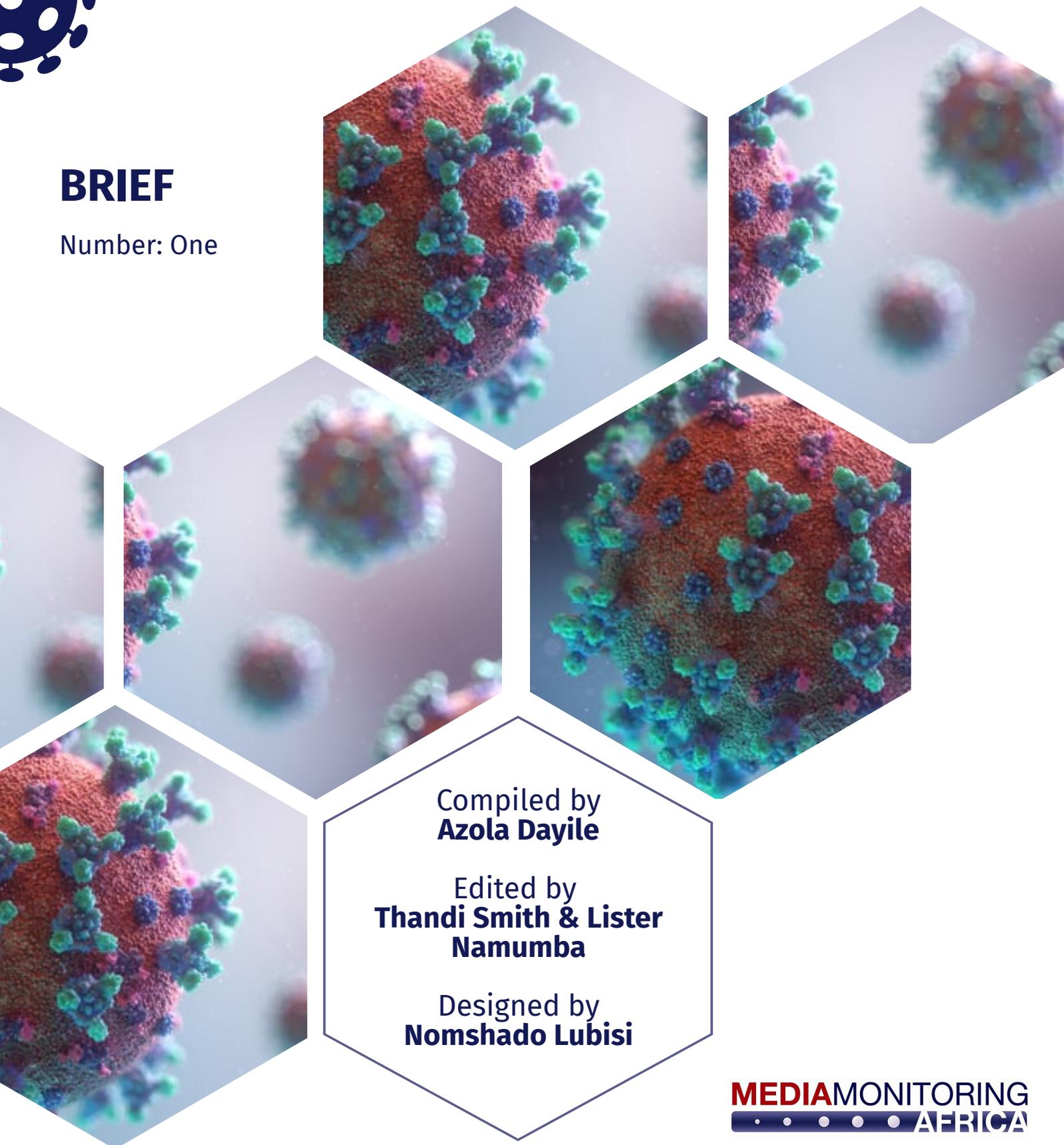# ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 MEDIA COVERAGE

BRIEF

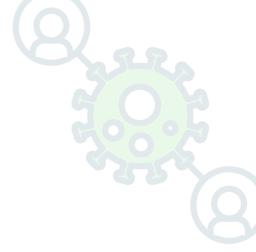Number: One

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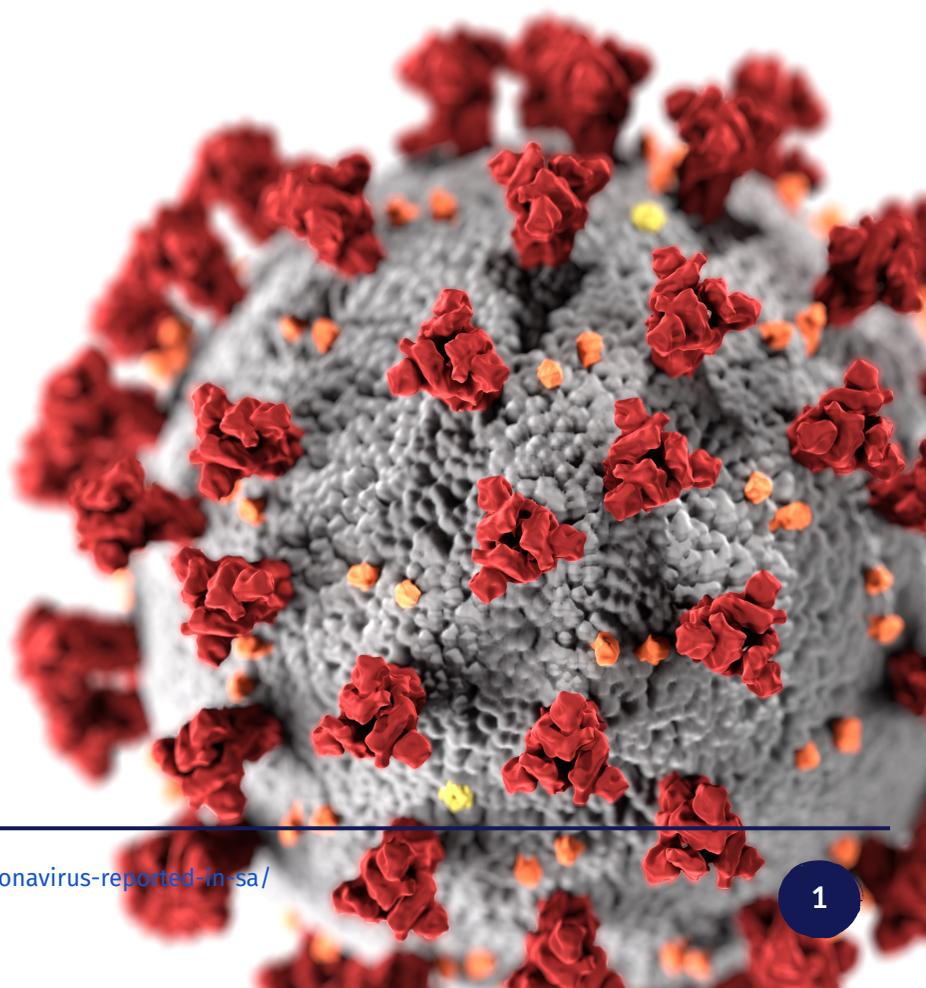**MEDIA**MONITORING
AFRICA

Introduction

On Thursday, March 05, 2020, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases of South Africa (NICD) confirmed that a suspected case of Covid-19 had tested positive.[1] Expectedly, this caught the attention of the public, and more so the media with many news publications reporting on the case. As the virus rapidly spread, an increasing number of Covid-19 related articles were published on a daily basis on South African online news/media publications.

In order to establish trends in this coverage, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) is undertaking an analysis of who is interviewed the most, the gender and race representations and, the collective number of articles published per week. This is to get a data-driven view of how the media reports on Covid-19 in a short period. This analysis is for a period of five days. We use Dexter,[2] an in-house online tool, to gather and analyse the data using keywords "Coronavirus", "Quarantine", "Lockdown", "Covid-19" and "Pandemic". For the purpose of this brief, we covered a five-day period from the 13th – 17th April, 2020. The total number of articles analysed is 2368.
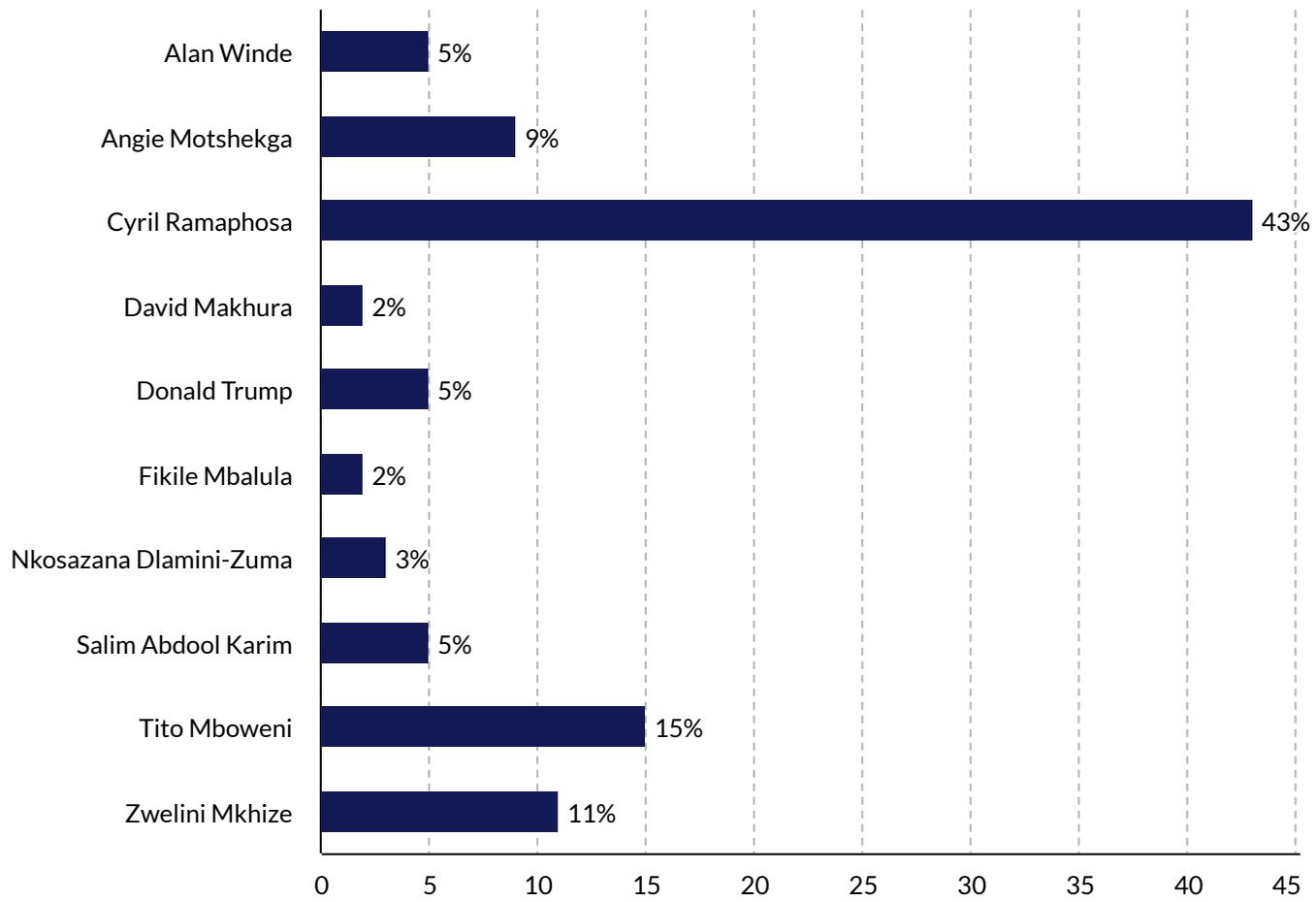
[1] See: https://www.nicd.ac.za/first-case-of-covid-19-coronavirus-reported-in-sa/
[2] Access to Dexter can be granted upon request.

Whose voice do we hear in the media?

fig.1

Looking at the sources breakdown in the graph above (fig.1), what can be gleaned from the data is that the people who have been interviewed and/or quoted by the media are high-ranking government officials. The President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa was the most interviewed personality, having been mentioned 43% of the time. He is followed by three of his colleagues who include Finance Minister, Tito Mboweni (15%), Health Minister, Zweli Mkhize (11%) and Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga (9%). A notable feature is also the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump (5%), who is in fifth position on the graph. Very little voice was given to independent experts (doctors, medical researchers, scientists etc), members of the public or other relevant entities.

Gender Breakdown

GENDER REPRESENTATION

Female
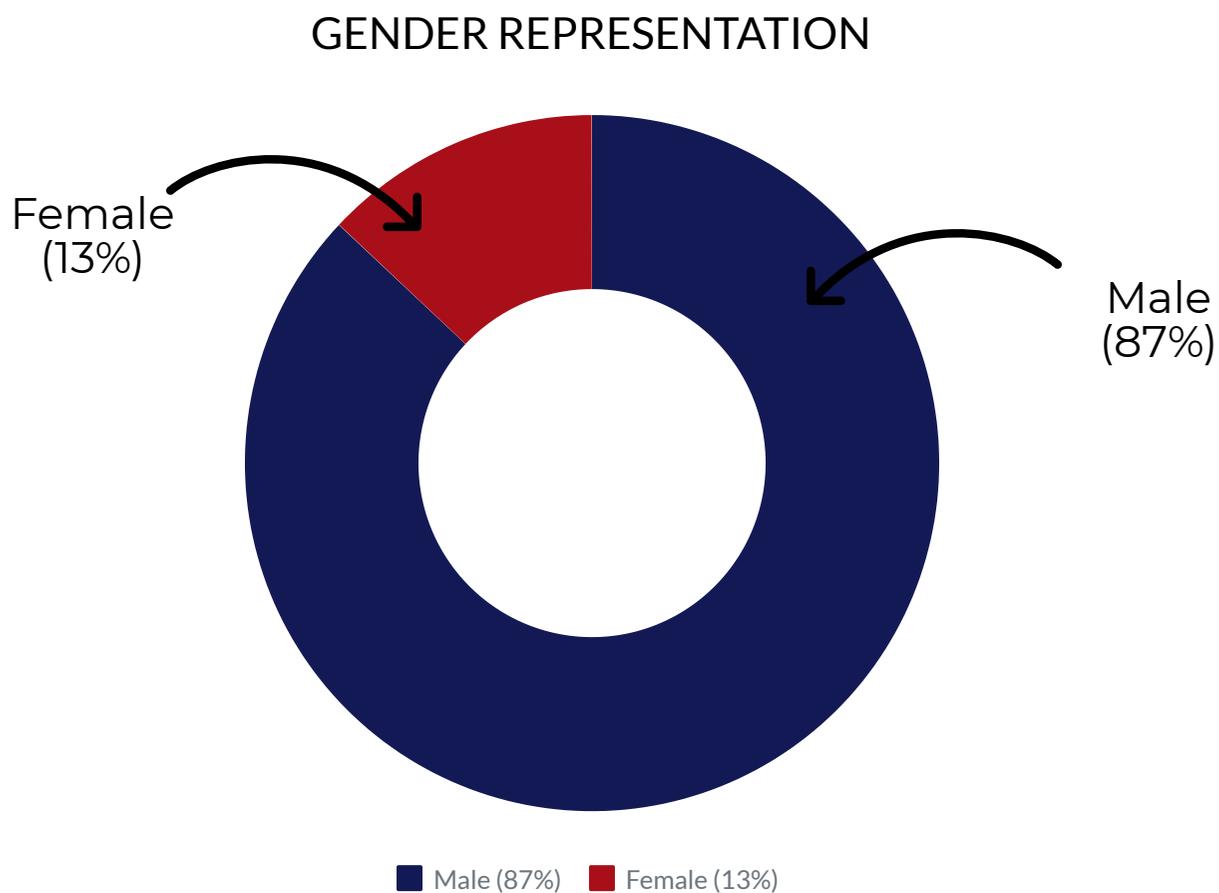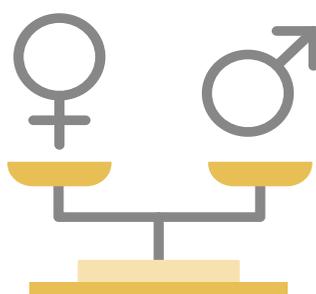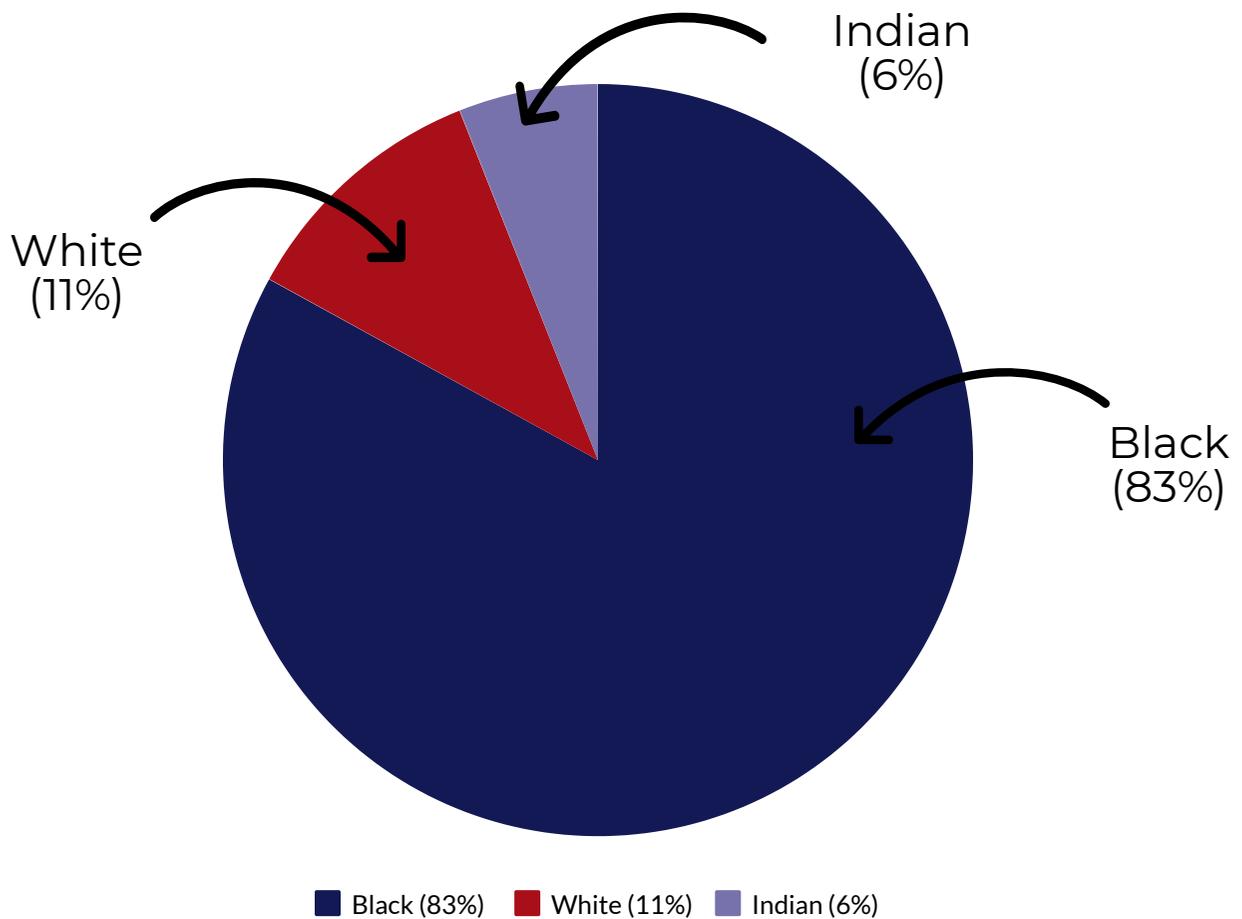(13%)

Male
(87%)

■ Male (87%)   ■ Female (13%)

Fig.2 above presents the gender dynamic of those mostly accessed/interviewed/quoted in the media. The graph shows a heavy concentration of male voices, taking up 87% of the share of voices and the rest of the 13% being women. This is totally disproportionate to the gender spread in South Africa where the female population (50.5%) eclipses the male population by (1%) according to official statistics.[3] The previous graph, fig.1, corroborates this finding where most of the sources were male.

[3] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-05/Report-03-10-052011.pdf

According to fig.3 above where race is represented, black people were the most to speak (accessed 83% of the time) on matters pertaining to Covid-19 in the period we studied. This would also have much to do with the fact that it was mainly government officials who spoke on the matter. Furthermore, South African black people make up almost as much in terms of population size, the figure sitting at 81%. White people make up 8% of the population according to Statistics South Africa's community survey of 2016. Indian voices made up 6% of those speaking and these included Professor Salim Abdool Karim, the Chief Covid-19 advisor who was sourced widely.[4] Notably, voices of coloured people were overlooked in the media during the period in question.

It is evident that the media were quick to respond in reporting and covering stories related to Covid-19 since the first positive test was confirmed in South Africa. Consequently, a lot of the people interviewed for opinions and views on the matter were mainly official government voices, possibly as a result of government's efforts to constantly and consistently communicate with the public and possibly curb and avoid dis/misinformation during this time of uncertainty and anxiety.

[4] See: http://cs2016.statssa.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/NT-30-06-2016-RELEASE-for-CS-2016-_Statistical-releas_1-July-2016.pdf