

South Africa's 'Rebellion of the Poor': An Overview

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Background to the 'Rebellion of the Poor' project

- **2009:** Produce rapid response research report after a number of large protests in Balfour, Diepsloot, Thokoza and Piet Retief.
- **2010:** Prof Peter Alexander publishes 'Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests – a preliminary analysis'. To date this article has been viewed over 3,700 times and cited in 269 academic papers.
- **2011 - 2016:** Commence a media-reported community protest database, to date over 2,500 protests recorded from 2004 – May 2016.
- **2012 - 2016:** Undertake qualitative research, to date over 300 interviews have been conducted in over 30 locations across the country. This research is ongoing.
- **2015 - 2016:** PAIA request grants access to 156,230 'crowd incidents' recorded by Incident Registration Information System (IRIS) from 1997-2013. Two research reports are published: *South African Police Service Data on Crowd Incidents: A Preliminary analysis* and *Counting Police-Recorded Protests: Estimates Based on South African Police Service Data*

Purpose of this presentation

This presentation will seek to answer a range of questions about protest in South Africa.

- What are the popular perceptions of protest and what does the evidence show?
- How many protests are there in South Africa and what are they about?
- Who is involved in protest and why?
- To what extent are protests disruptive or violent and are they increasing?
- How have the media represented protests and the implications of this?
- What are the underlying causes of protest?

Definitions of key terms

- **Protest**
A popular mobilisation in support of a collective grievance.
- **Incident Registration Information System (IRIS)**
The database used by SAPS to capture information on 'crowd management' incidents.
- **Police-recorded protest (PRP)**
A police-recorded protest is a popular mobilisation in support of a collective grievance that has been recorded by the South African Police Service as a 'crowd incident' (and thus lasts up to 24 hours).
- **Media-reported protest (MRP)**
Media-reported protests captured on our Rebellion of the Poor database.

Definitions of key terms

- **Orderly, disruptive and violent protests**

Orderly protests (formerly referred to as peaceful) are protests where there is no disruption or injury to persons or property.

Disruptive protests are identified through use of tactics such as blocking a road, for example by using rocks and/or burning of tyres, but do not involve injury to persons or property.

Violent protests as those involving injury to persons or damage to property.

Social protests on the rise in South Africa

26 May 2015 – There has been a 96% increase in social protests in South Africa since 2010, according to the Institute of Race Relations (IRR).

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News

It's official: protests straining the police

ANGER: SA SAW NEARLY 15 000 SERVICE DELIVERY PROTESTS LAST YEAR

→ Minister Nathi Nhleko says police not responsible for SA's problems and

fact of the matter is that these protests continue to strain the resources of the South African Police Service," he said during the Police and Independent Investigative Directorate (Iid) budget vote

nomenon was emerging. Cape Town's protests, for example, were instigated by people from individual households, which meant policing smaller groups.

In his budget vote speech, the 16 billion detective eagrowth rm.

"Sadly, we have confused those whose bosses are hired by promised president (Jacob) to protect him at all costs. turn hire people with no ing backgrounds," she said "Beneath them is a threadbare thin blue line police who strive to keep and who believe in this

Zuma sidesteps flames

2 947 | 3 258 | 32

President avoids Gauteng as protests rocket to 32 a day across SA over three months

The number of protests in SA in the past three months

The total number of protests between January 2010 and August 2012

The number of protests a day in SA over the past three months

POLICE STRAINED BY PROTESTS

Police Minister Nathi Nhleko has slammed service delivery protests for putting a strain on police. A spike in community protests resulted in resources having to be committed to 14 740 incidents, he said in his budget speech.

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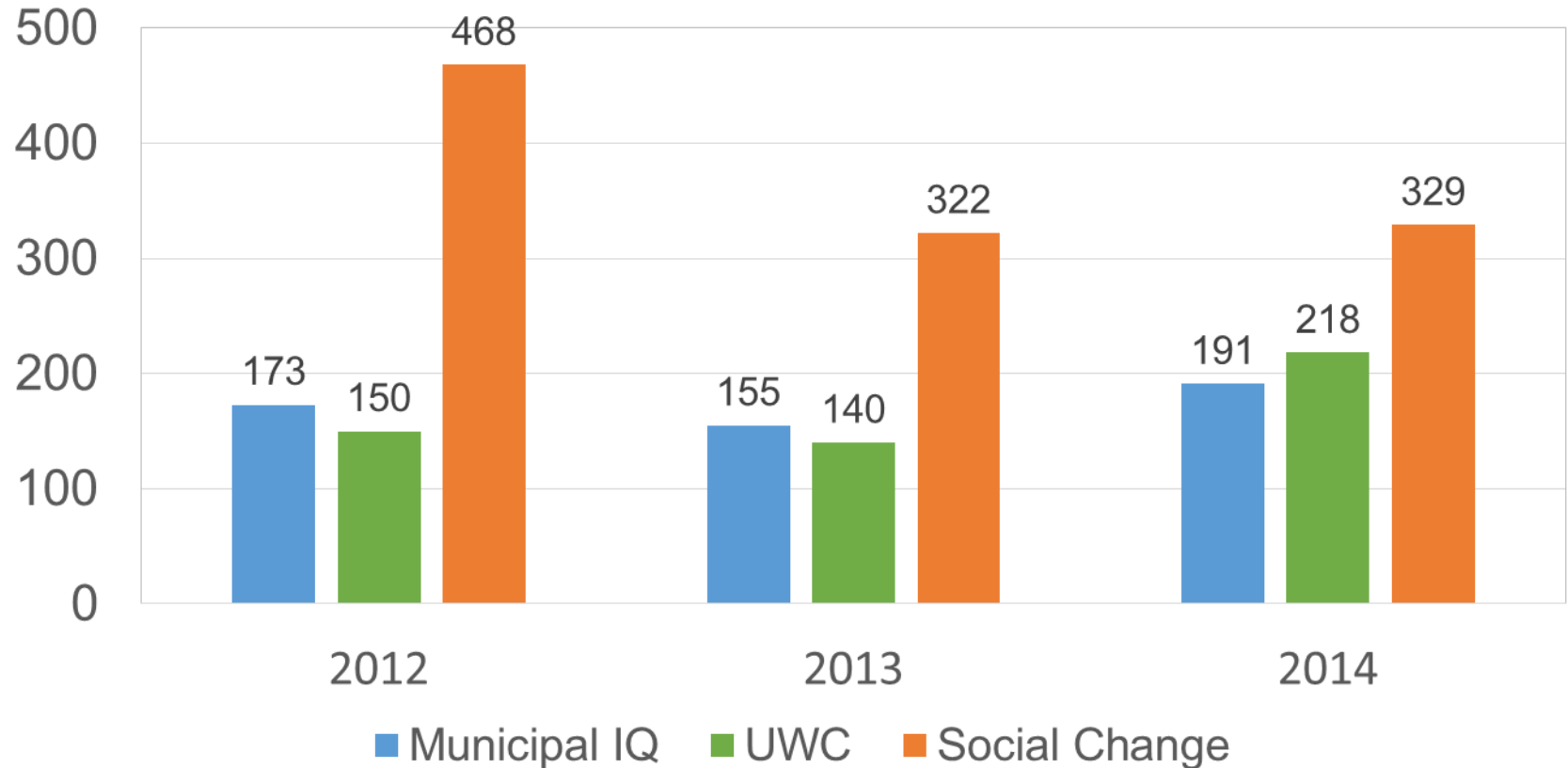
14 740 protests in a year 'strain' the SAPS

Social protests have doubled since 2010 - IRR

How many protests are there in South Africa?

- There is no publicly accessible state monitor of protest activity in South Africa.
- The Incident Registration Information System (IRIS) documents crowd management incidents. Incidents cannot be equated with protests, although some incidents may be protests.
- There are a number of organisations that capture information about protests from media-reports but each has its limitations.

Comparing media-reported protest databases



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

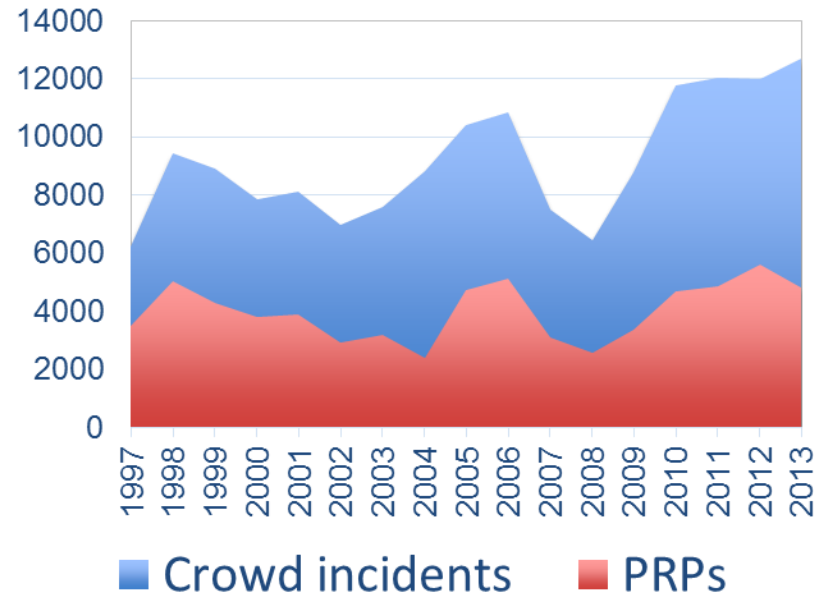


Methodology: Estimating Police-recorded Protests

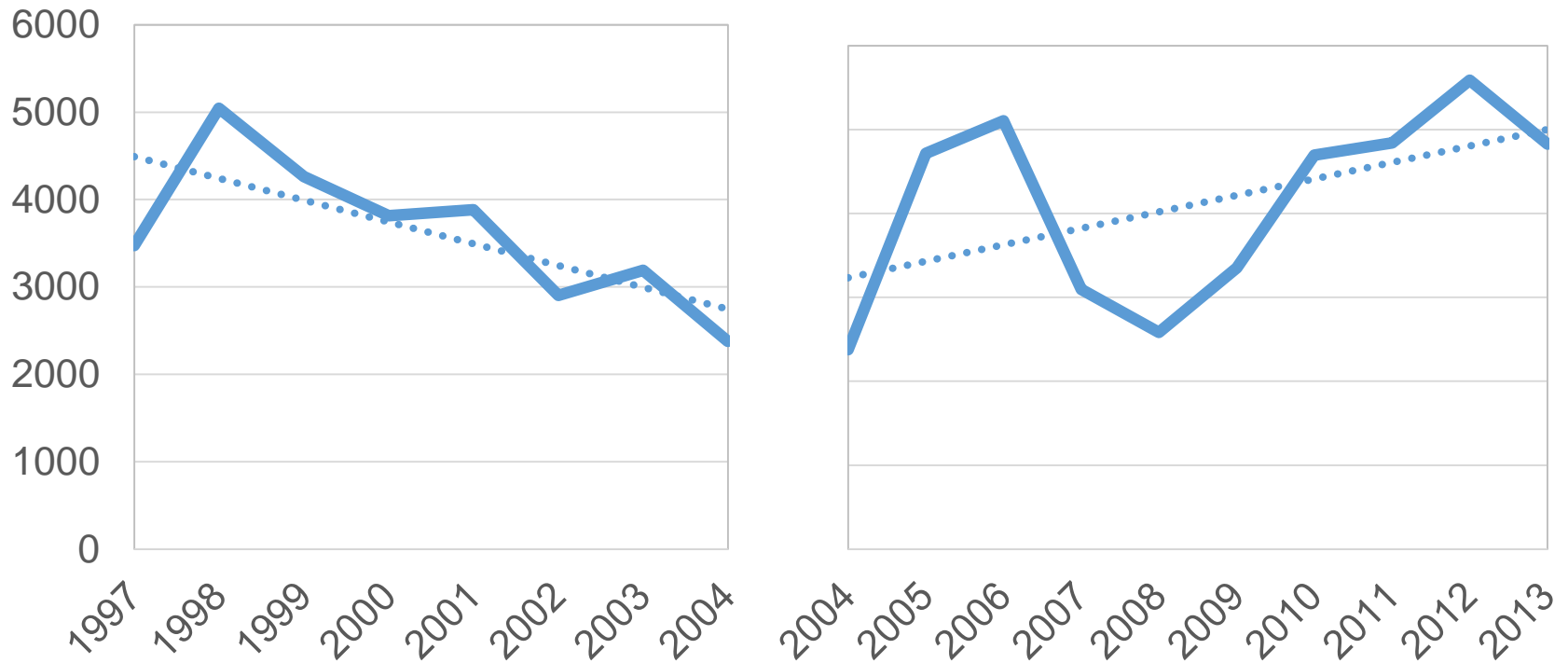
- A combination of disproportionate and proportionate stratified random sampling was used to obtain a representative sample of 4,520 incidents (2,856 'peaceful' and 1,654 'unrest').
- Strata were the eventuality classification of the incident, whether the police had classified an incident as 'peaceful' or 'unrest' where 'unrest' is defined as police intervention.
- From 4,520 incidents 2,314 were found to be protests.
- Protests were then coded into one of nine protest foci Labour, Community, Education, Crime, Transport, Party Political, Customary, Xenophobia and Other.

Estimating the frequency of police-recorded protest

- Less than half of IRIS incidents (42%) were PRPs.
- Working with 95% confidence limits, we can be 95% confident that the proportion of 'peaceful' incidents that were PRPs lies between 39% and 43%.
- Working with 95% confidence limits, we can be 95% confident that the proportion of 'unrest' incidents that were PRPs lies between 66% and 71%.

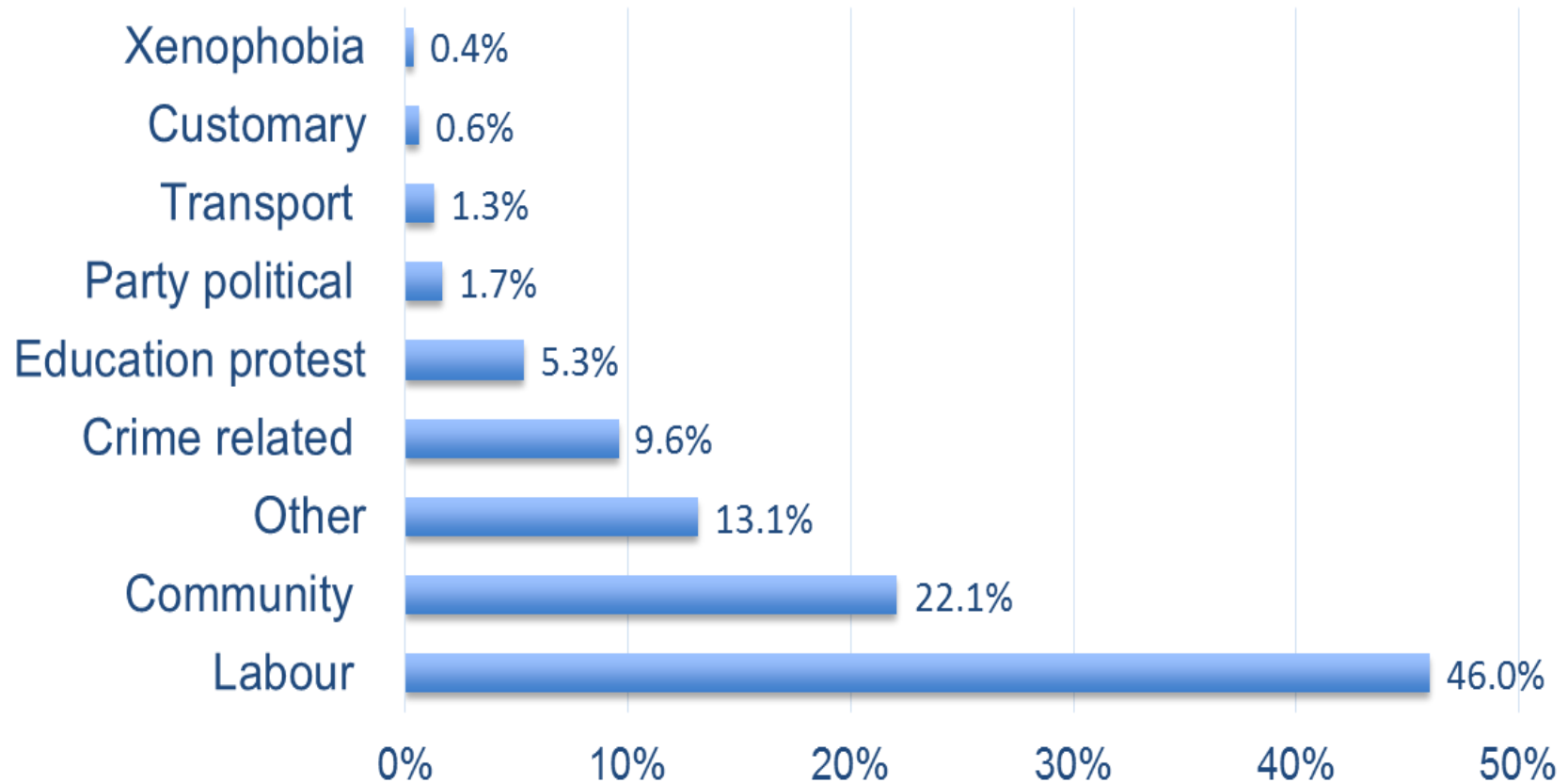


Estimated number of PRPs 1997-2013



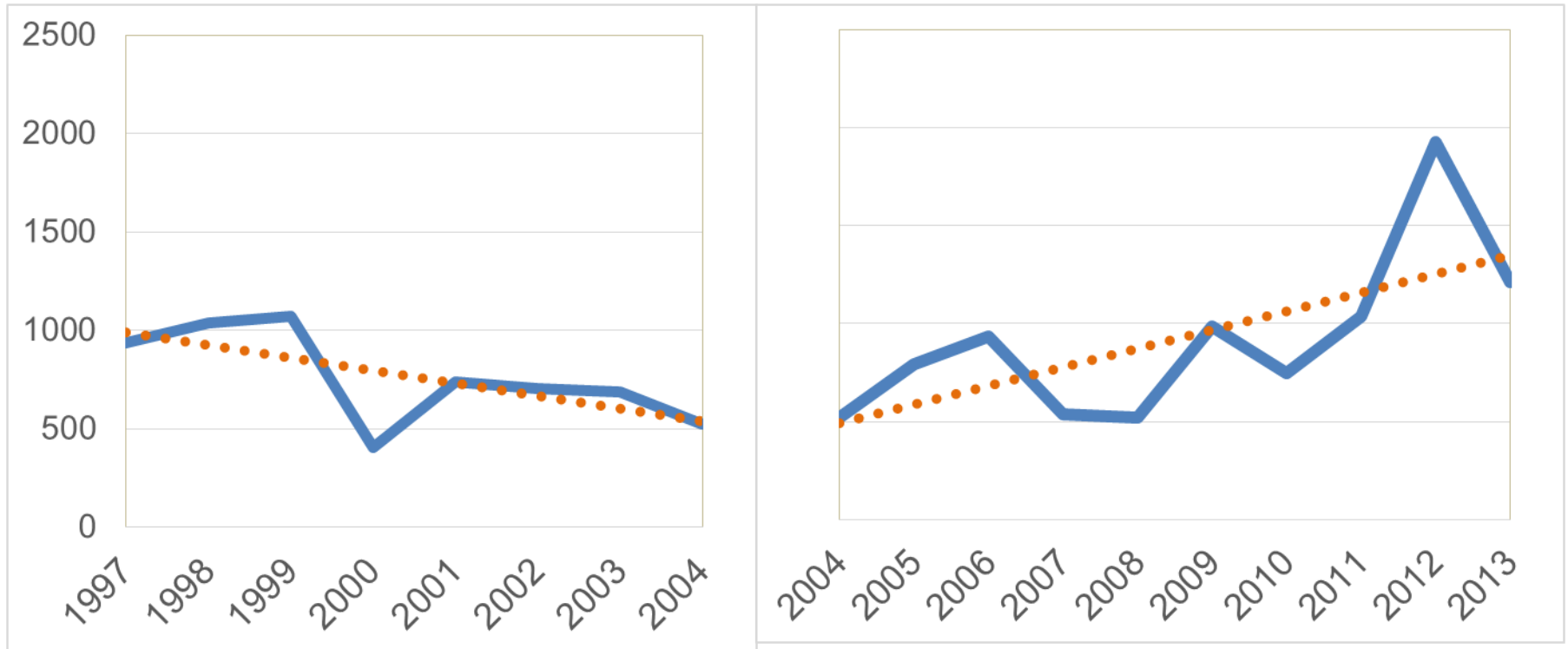
Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

The focus of PRPs 1997 – 2013



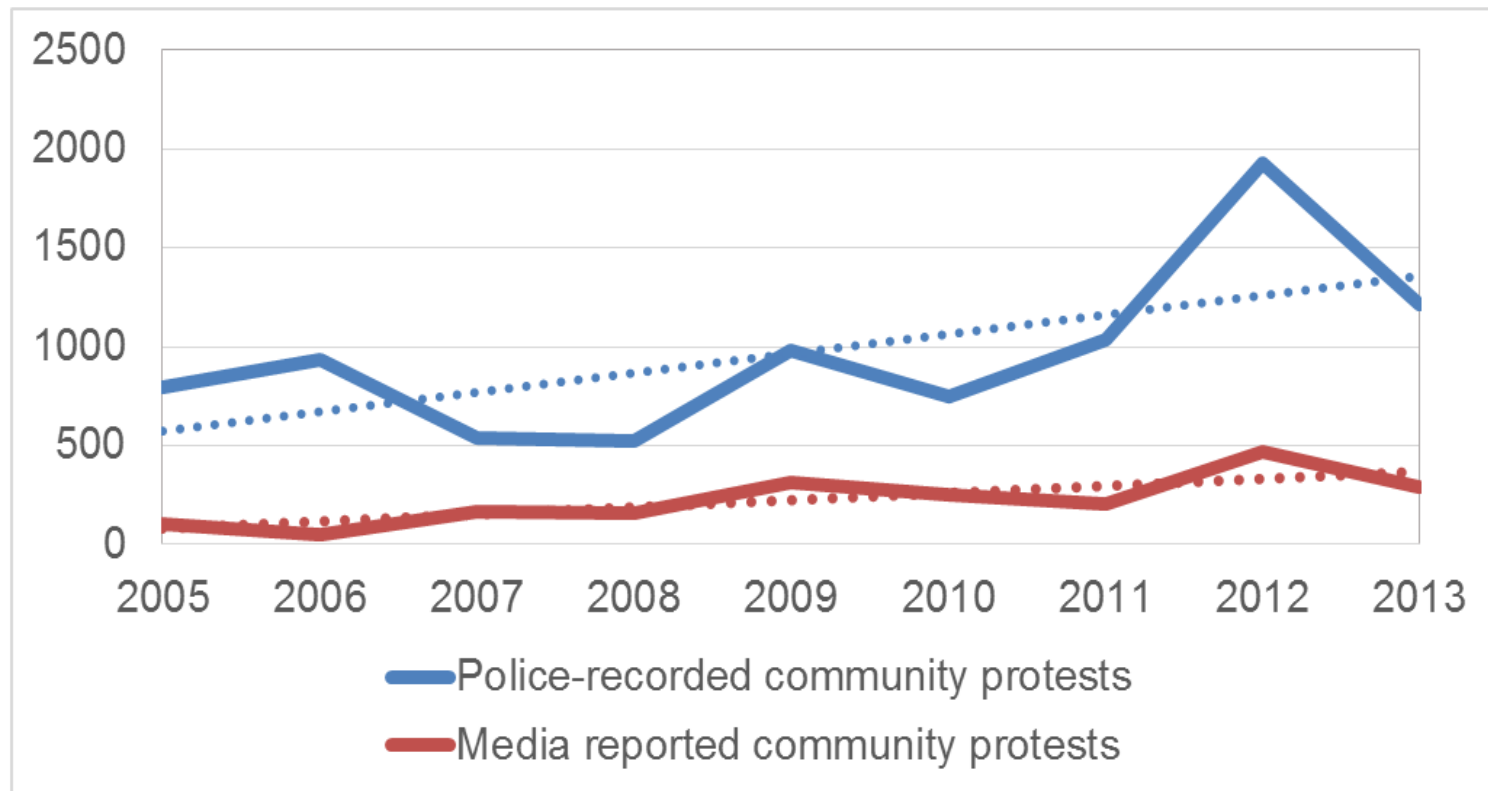
Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

Community PRPs 1997-2013



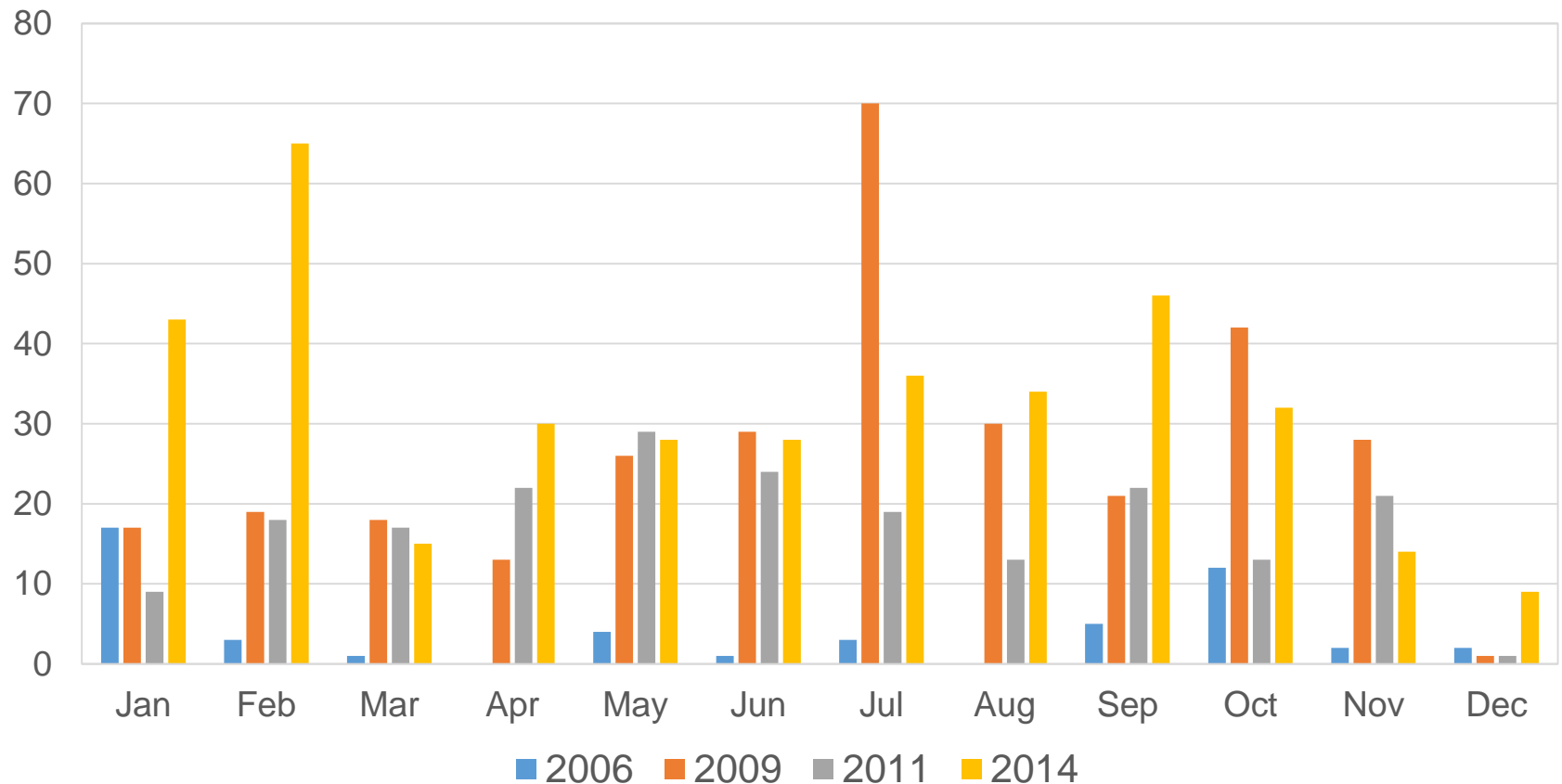
Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

Comparing MRP and PRP data on protests 2005-2013



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

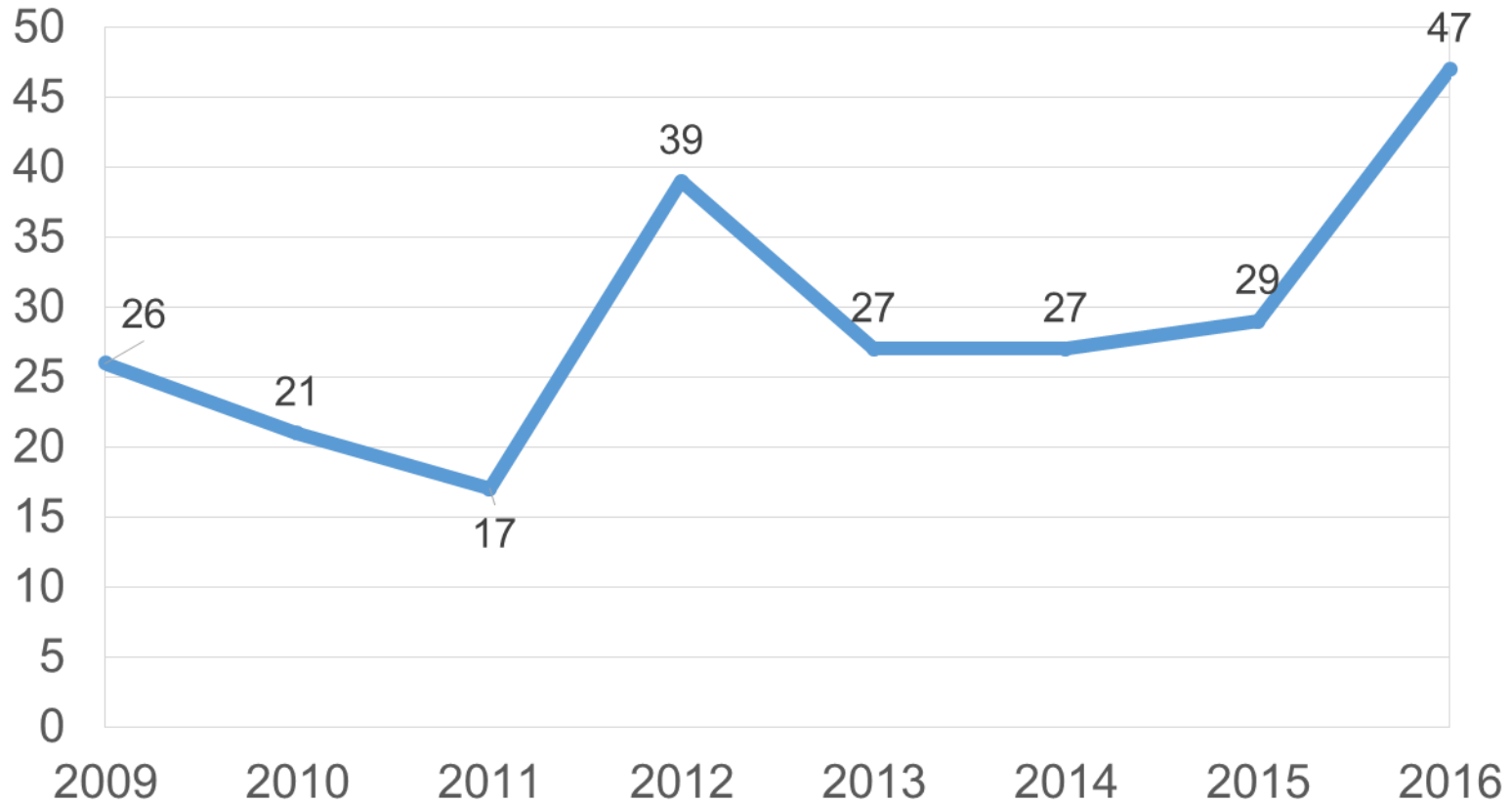
Protest frequency in election years



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

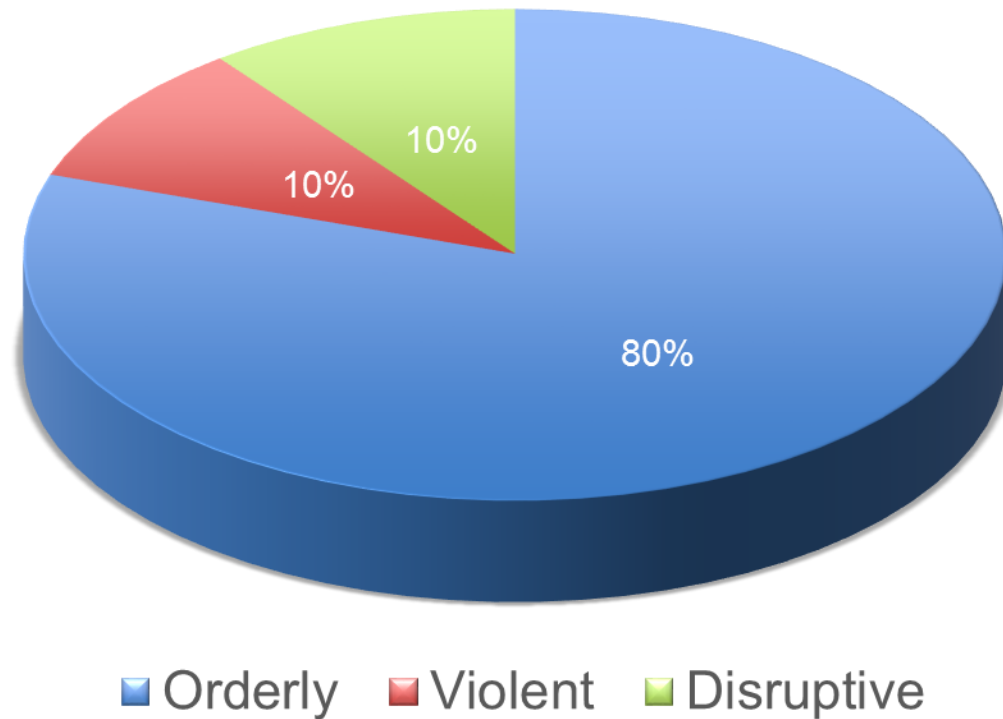


Average number of MRPs per month 2009-2016



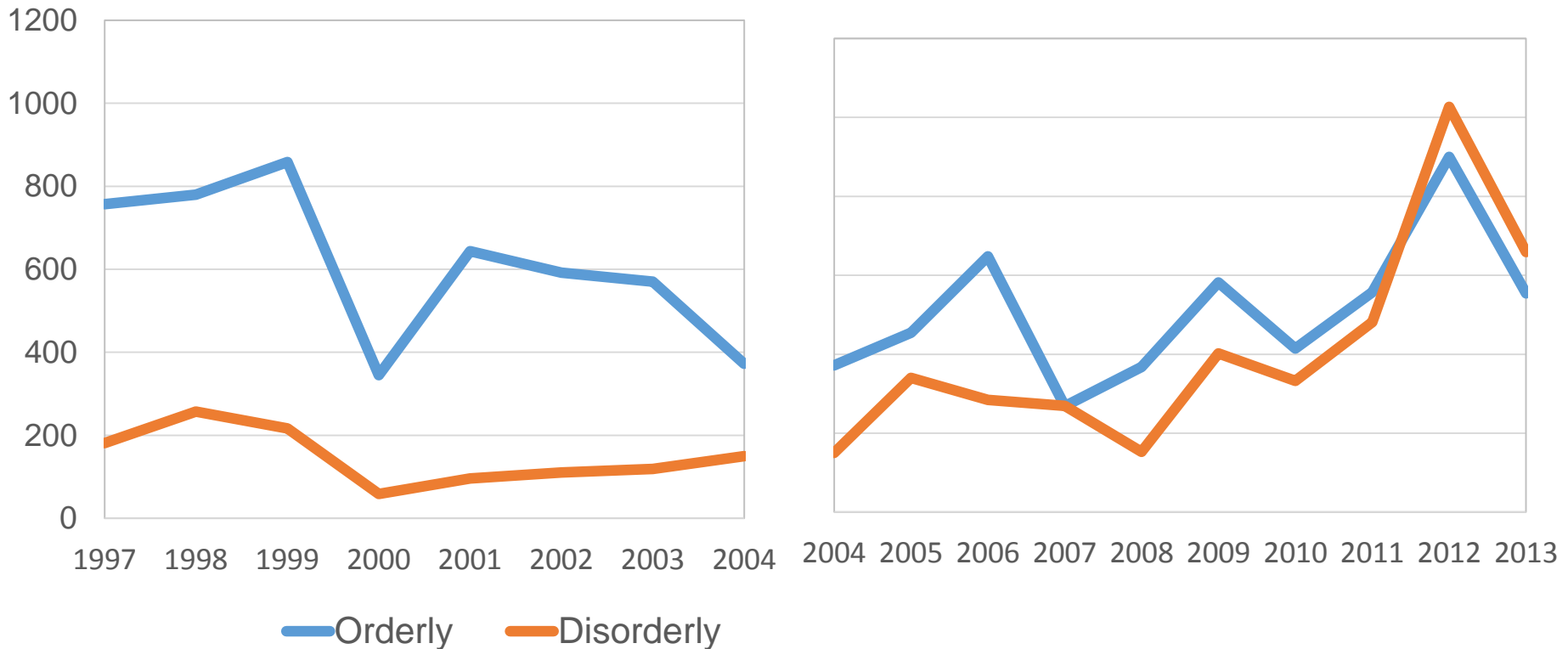
Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

Orderly, disruptive and violent PRPs, 1997-2013



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

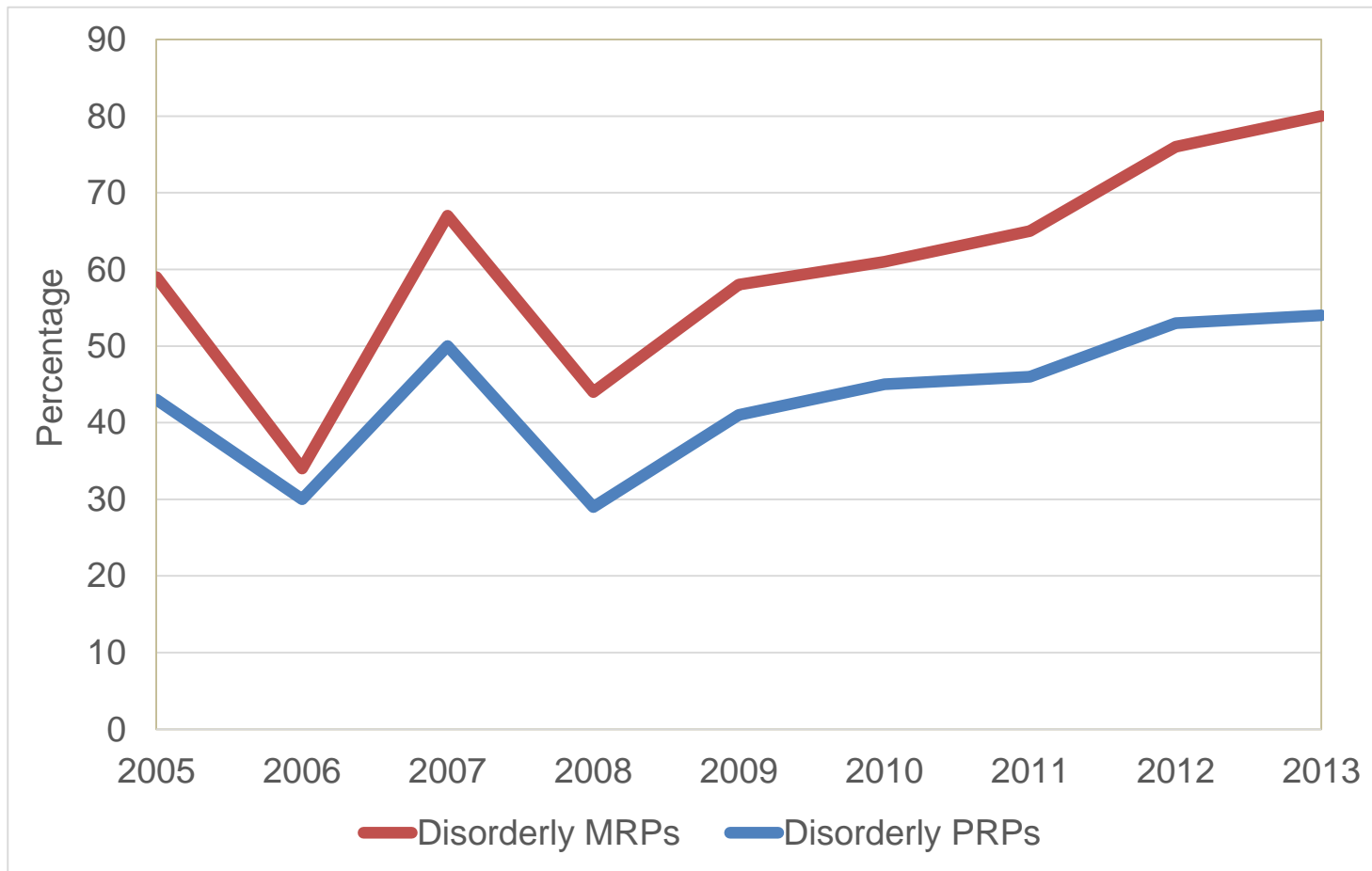
Estimated numbers of orderly and disorderly community PRPs, 1997-2013



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

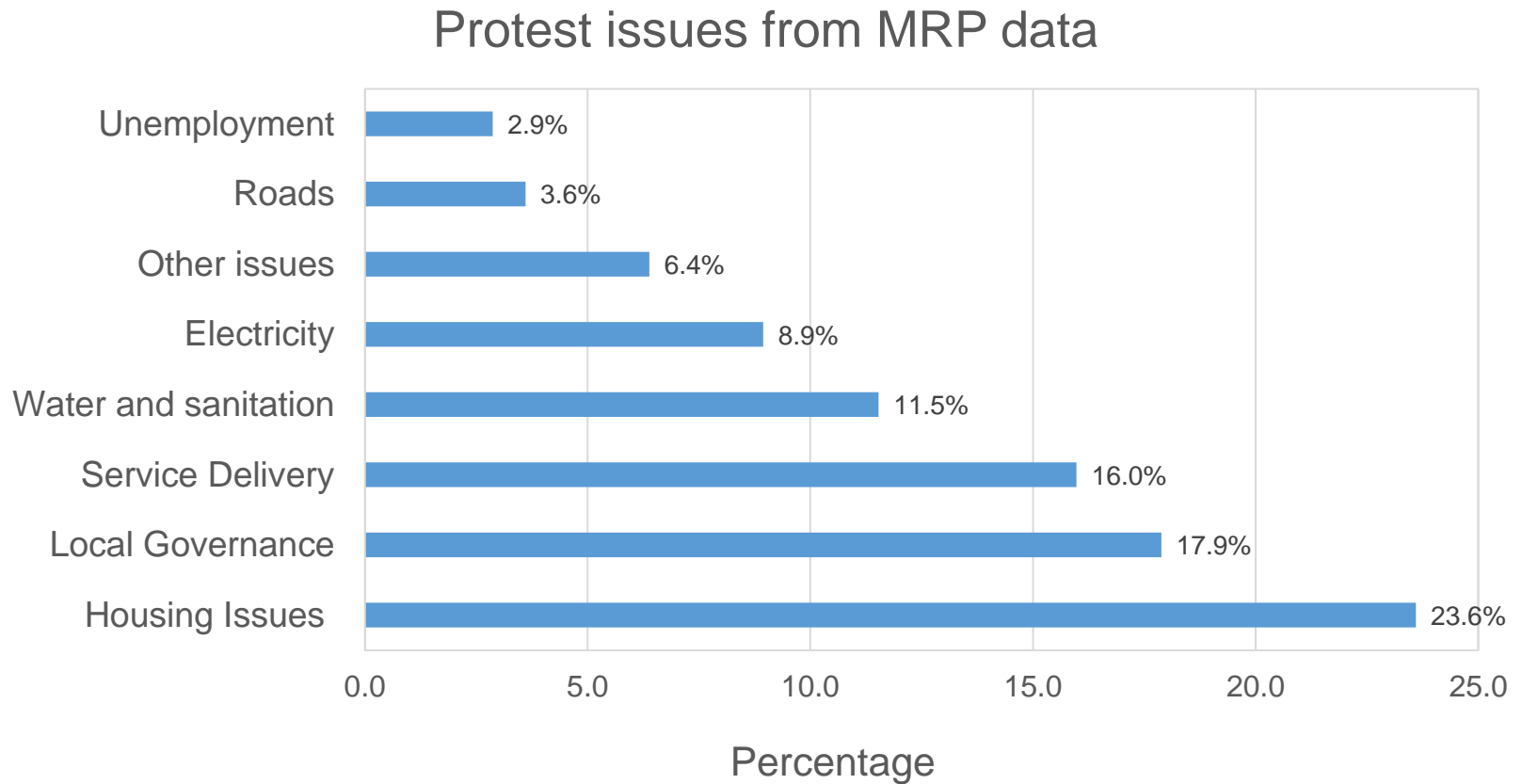


PRP and MRP reporting of disorder 2005-2013



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change

What are people protesting about?



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change



Accountability and councillors

This issue is: the reason why leaders are so stubborn is because they know that the community does not have the authority to remove them. This person was elected by us, so if we feel that the person is incompetent we should have the right to dismiss that person and appoint another one to lead the people. [05BB]

Accountability and services

Residents are saying we elected those people but now we do not want them any more, because they are not doing anything for us. But those people still want to hold on to power. .. We have our own government now but it is not accountable to the needs of the people, it is accountable to its own needs. It is far removed from what the people want.[207SB]

Nepotism and jobs

Whenever these opportunities come, for instance when 20 people are required by the EPWP (expanded public works programme, the municipality does not call on all members of the community to apply so that everything is fair. Instead, the municipality unilaterally chooses those people [115MAF]

Corruption and jobs

While you do not have money, one cannot even “buy” a job? That means you will remain at home, being a sit-along (lehlalela), just like that. You have nothing. One has no income but they want some money, you must have’ something’ in order to ‘buy’ employment. [166ZRT]

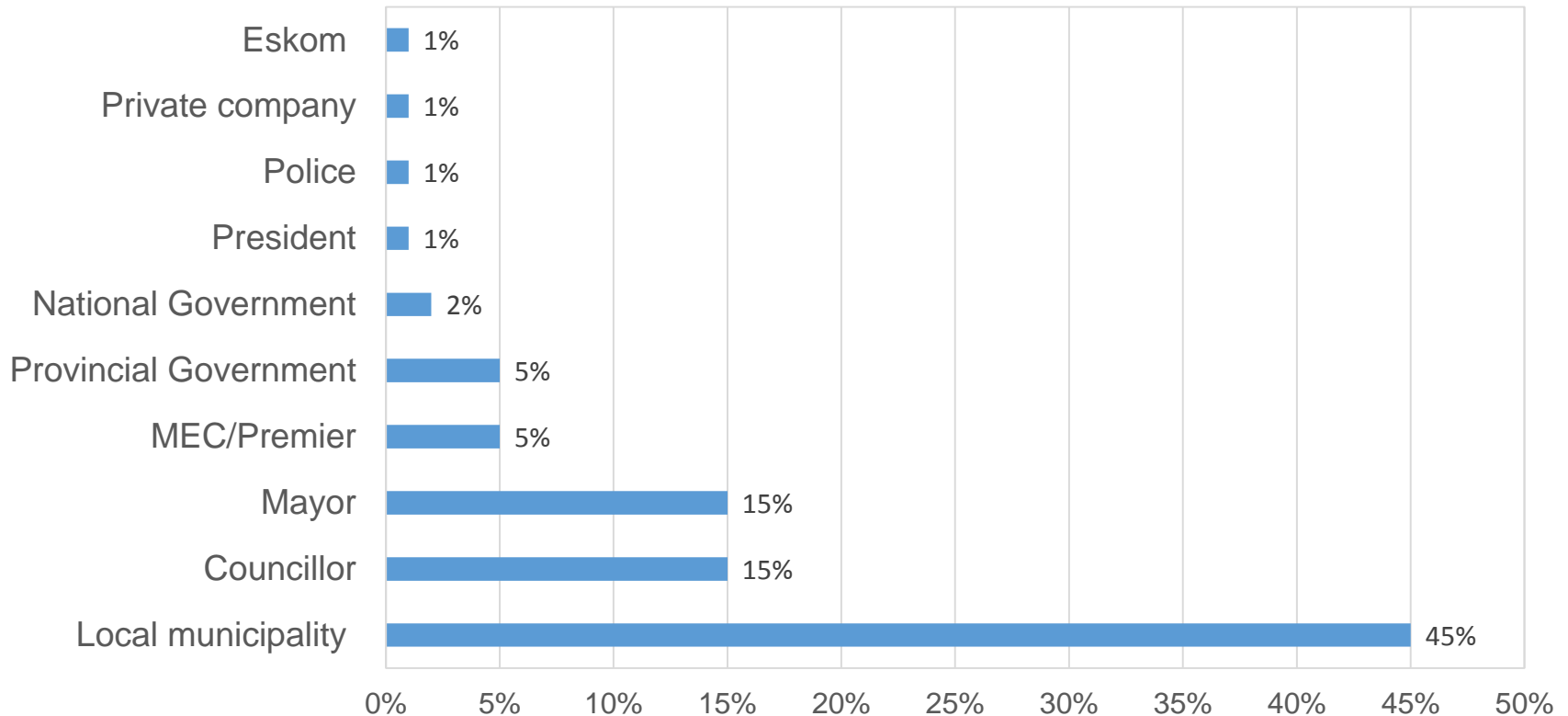
Electricity and poverty

I think the demands are genuine, simply because really they can’t afford to buy electricity at these high rates, because of unemployment and poverty, so I think are genuine. [106KWT]



Who do people protest against?

Target of who protests are directed to or against



Source: South African Research Chair in Social Change



What are the underlying causes of protest?

The dominant and common explanations focus on one of the following;

- Patronage politics from below
- Rising expectations
- Inequality

Patronage politics

Research claims ANC members play leading role in protests

12 Aug 2012 19:35 by: Sapa filed under: National



According to the report ANC members played a leading role in all service delivery protests. (M&G)

- Strong quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests this is a minority of cases.
- Even when protests are led by ANC members or factional interests this does not mean there are not also genuine community grievances.

Rising expectations

The dominant narrative in the case of the protests in South Africa has been to attribute them to alleged failures of government. However the protests are not simply the result of “failures” of government but also of the success in delivering basic services. When 95% of households have access to water, the 5% who still need to be provided for, feel they cannot wait a moment longer. Success is also the breeding ground of rising expectations (President Jacob Zuma, State of the Nation Address 13 February 2014).

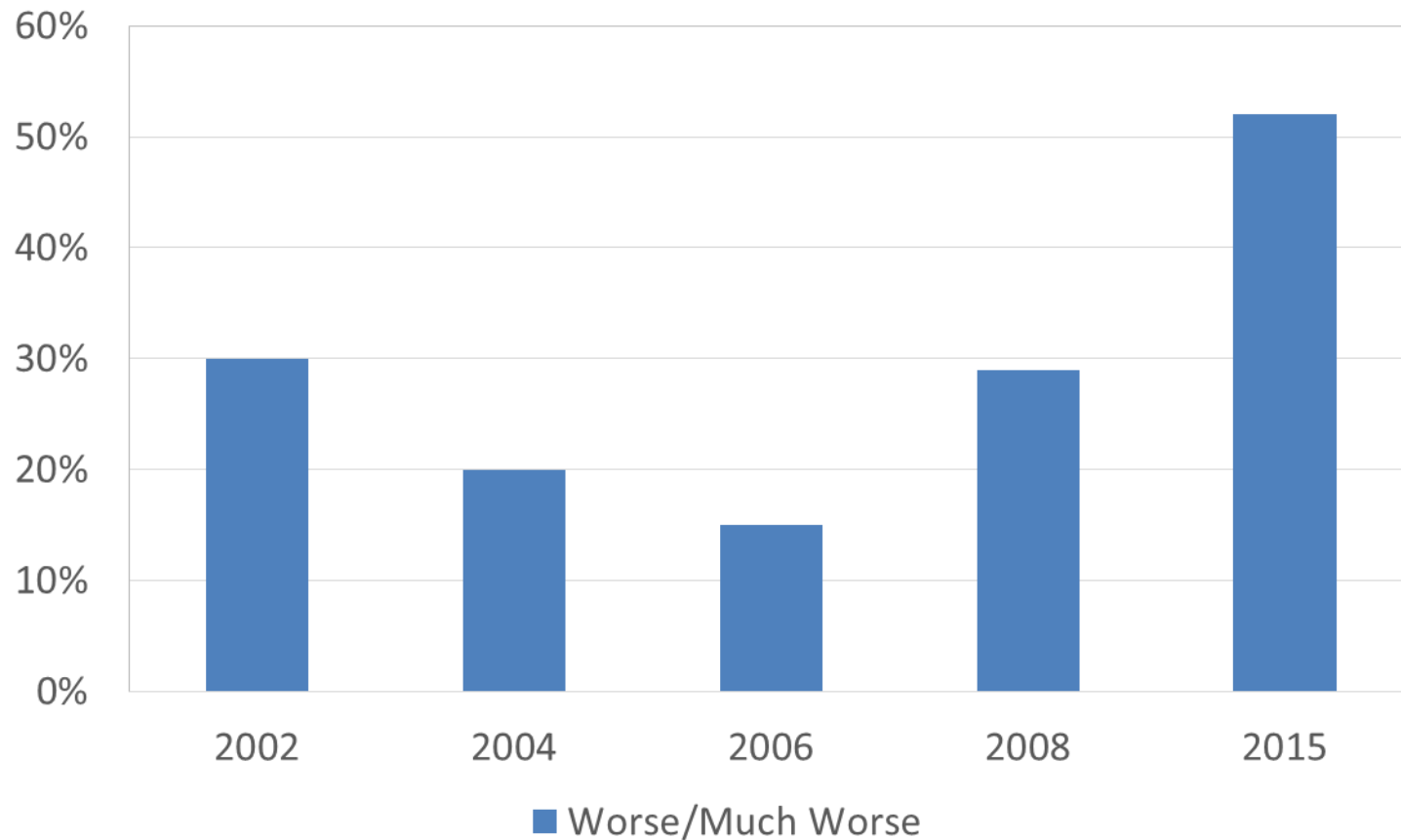
Less poor, stubbornly unequal

	2006	2009	2011
Percentage of the population that is poor	57.2%	56.8%	45.5%
Number of people living in poverty/extreme poverty (millions)	39.7	43.6	33.2
Gini coefficient (income)	0.72	0.70	0.69

Source: StatsSA



Perceptions of improvement in socio-economic conditions since 1994



Source: Afrobarometer



‘Democracy is for those who have money’

In the documents there is democracy, in terms of the Constitution, but practically it does not exist.

Democracy is for rich people ... I am still staying here, but the democracy is there. We have no water here, but the democracy is there. We've got no toilets here, we've got no services. We have to march

Democracy is for those who have money and everyone who can afford, I think now you have to buy democracy

The marketization of local government

- Marketization: A process whereby services that were previously controlled and run by the state become subject to market forces.
- GEAR reduces capital transfers from national to local government. In 2015/2016, the unconditional grants received from national government accounted for only 9 % of budgeted municipal revenue.
- Constrained municipal finance leads to cost recovery measures.

Before 1994 there was problems which differ from the problems that we are facing now. Before 1994 what I would say is that people were working and the price and the cost of living was low... after 1994 people were liberated from oppression, not from the economy. Everything was privatised and people could not afford to buy bread... Apartheid is gone and the new government is in but people cannot afford to run their life.

Experiences of engaging governance

After we left the hall, we had some conflict with the councillor because he promised us something that was not there. He could have at least told us that our community would not be included in the IDP. Some councillors are decent enough to explain that this year this will happen or not... They have been promising us that they will build the water supply pipes for the reservoir... and still they have not. But now we have realised that the councillor has been lying to us and giving us empty promises. He told us that the water problem will be solved but it still has not. And then we argued with the councillor and told him that from now he will see what the community will do to get the water...my friends and I concluded that without a strike we will not be assisted. So we went to the magistrate to endorse our march and he did as such.

Conclusions

