

An Overview of Strike activities in South Africa, 1999-2011

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INTRODUCTION

Workers' right to strike¹ is entrenched in the South African Constitution and this right is generally considered to be a sign of a healthy democracy. Strikes represent the ultimate sanctions of employees, represented by trade unions, to enforce their demands for higher remuneration, better working conditions, fair treatment by the employers, etc. Strike activity is an integral part of collective bargaining, and the power relationship between employers and employees would be severely distorted without the right to strike. In the case where trade unions are absent or not strong enough to ensure proper collective bargaining, the government might intervene to settle the disputes between employers and employees.

Although strikes could be seen as a process of relationship building between employers and employees and indicate a healthy sign of a free economy, they entail economic costs that can be significant, depending on strike duration, the number of workers involved and the sector affected. Such costs include the loss of working days, wages and output, as well as potentially having knock-on effects on other sectors (Barker, 2008, pp.101-102). In fact, South Africa's strong trade union movement and strike activities have often been raised as contributing to employment rigidity, wage rigidity and high unemployment levels (Nattrass, 2000; Barker, 2008, 95-96; Paton, 2011).

Information on strike activities is recorded by the Department of Labour (DoL). Firms affected by strikes are required by the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995 to submit specific information to the DoL within seven days of the completion of the strike, lockout or protest action.² Information submitted includes details of the employer (e.g. province of location, nature of the business, whether the wages and working conditions are determined in a bargaining council or similar industry-level body) and of the action (e.g. its nature and duration, the number of employees involved, whether trade unions were involved, reasons for the action). This information is used by the DoL to monitor industrial action and is published in summary form in the Annual Report on Industrial Action. Using the information from various issues of these reports, this factsheet presents longer-term trends on strike activities covering the period from 1999 to 2011.³ It begins by looking at the overall extent of industrial action, before examining what has been happening across industries, provinces and trade unions, as well as the principle cause of disputes.

Overview of the Extent of Industrial Action

Between 1999 and 2011, it is estimated that nearly 49.9 million working days were lost due to industrial action in South Africa. These days are, though, not evenly distributed over time, as is evident in Figure 1. Working days lost are a function of the number of workers involved and the duration of the industrial action, and the significant variation over time is the result of changes in either or both of these factors.

Between 1999 and 2002, days lost to industrial action declined from 2.6 million days to 0.6 million days. This 76.5 percent decline is attributed to the amendment of the LRA in 1995, as the "attendant improvement in dispute resolution procedures has led to a greater predictability around the bargaining process and a sustained reduction in the incidence of strike activity" (Department of Labour, 2003, p.2).

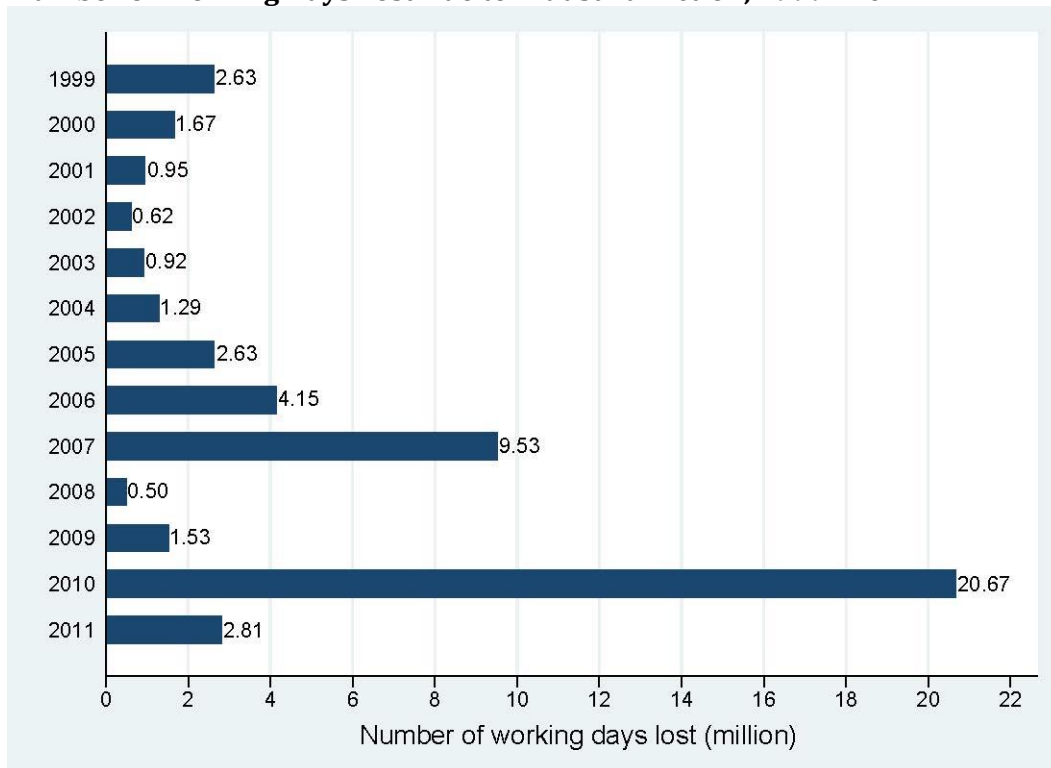
¹ A strike stands for "the partial or complete concerted refusal to work, or the retardation or obstruction of work, by people who are or have been employed by the same employer or by different employers, for the purposes of remedying a grievance or resolving a dispute in respect of any matter of mutual interest between employer and worker, and every reference to work in this definition includes overtime work, whether it is voluntary or compulsory" (Department of Labour, 2004, p.22).

² If a strike, lockout or protest action takes place in more than one workplace of an employer, a separate form must be completed for each workplace.

³ At the time of publication, the 2012 data had not been made publicly available.

Further, the Department (2004, p.5) argued that the downward trend was due to the decline in industrial action over restructuring and wages, as well as the effect of multiyear agreements in significant sectors.

Figure 1: Number of Working Days Lost Due to Industrial Action, 1999 - 2011



Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2012

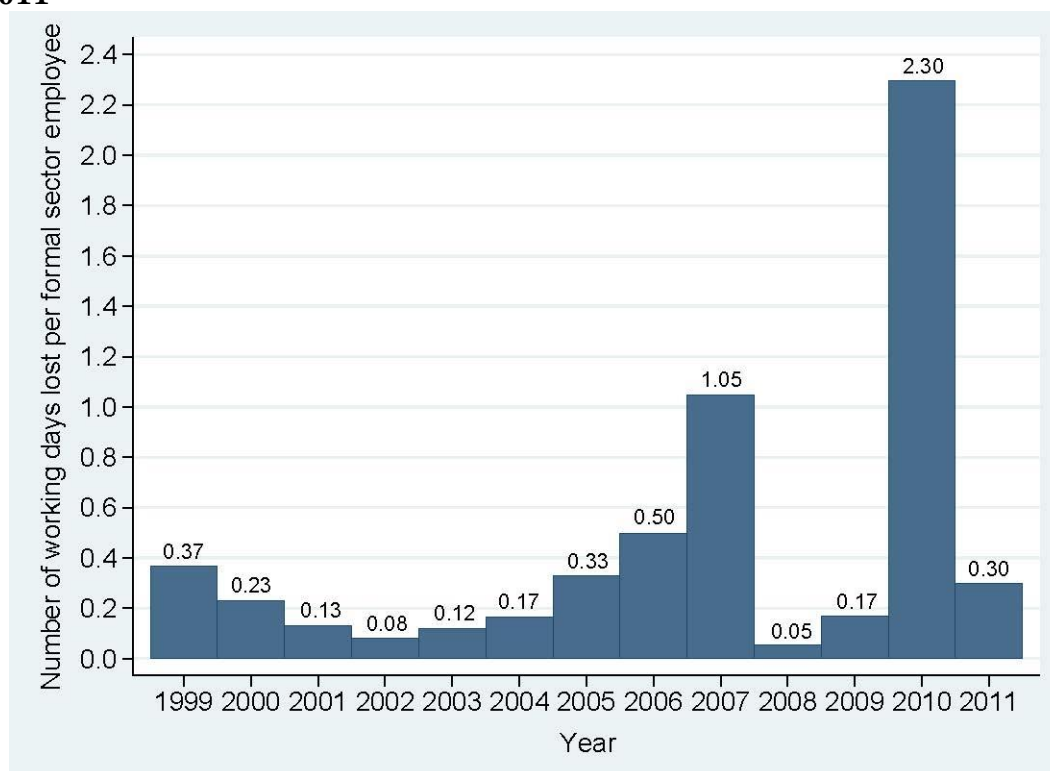
The following five years saw the number of working days lost increase continuously and at a generally accelerating rate. Having increased to 0.9 million (+49.4 percent) in 2003, working days lost reached almost 1.3 million in 2004, driven by industrial action in the mining sector in the North West (Department of Labour, 2004, p.2; 2005, p.3). Days lost then doubled to 2.6 million in 2005, with just 11 stoppages accounting for 75.6 percent of all days lost. Industrial action in 2005 included the first nationwide gold miners' strike in 18 years and the first strike for some time at South African Airways (Department of Labour, 2006, p.1). In 2006, working days lost increased to 4.2 million on the back of longer than usual national strikes. The security guard strike lasted more than 96 days, while strikes at Shoprite/Checkers, at Sun International and amongst contract cleaners lasted 69 days, 56 days and 49 days respectively (Department of Labour, 2007, pp.1-2). By 2007, working days lost had reached 9.5 million, the increase the result of a public sector strike in June that lasted 25 working days. This strike alone accounted for about 85% of the total working days lost in 2007 (Department of Labour, 2008, pp.1-2).

The fifteen-fold increase in working days lost between 2002 and 2007 was followed by a lull in 2008, when just half a million days were lost – a 95 percent reduction. This represents the low-point during the 13-year period under investigation. Although the number of days lost tripled in 2009 to 1.5 million, this remains relatively low for the period and less than one-sixth of the 2007 figure. Nevertheless, this coincided with South Africa's first recession since 1992 as the global economic slowdown and financial crisis impacted South Africa's main trade partners and real GDP fell by 1.7 percent. Nearly half of the strikes occurred in mining and manufacturing.

Strike activity in all of the preceding 11 years were dwarfed by the explosion of working days lost in 2010, the result of a public sector strike during July and August of that year (Department of Labour,

2011, p.viii). At nearly 20.7 million days lost, 2010 accounted for 41.4 percent of all working days lost during the entire 13-year period and was more than twice the 2007 figure. Finally, the number of working days lost decreased drastically by 86.4% to 2.8 million in 2011. This big decline can be explained by the reduction of the strikes in the public sector with the signing of a wage agreement (Department of Labour, 2012, p.6). In fact, the biggest strikes in 2011 took place in the private sector such as truck drivers, steel and engineering as well as the chemical industries (Department of Labour, 2012, p.8).

Figure 2: Number of Working Days Lost Due to Industrial Action by Formal Sector Employment, 1999 - 2011



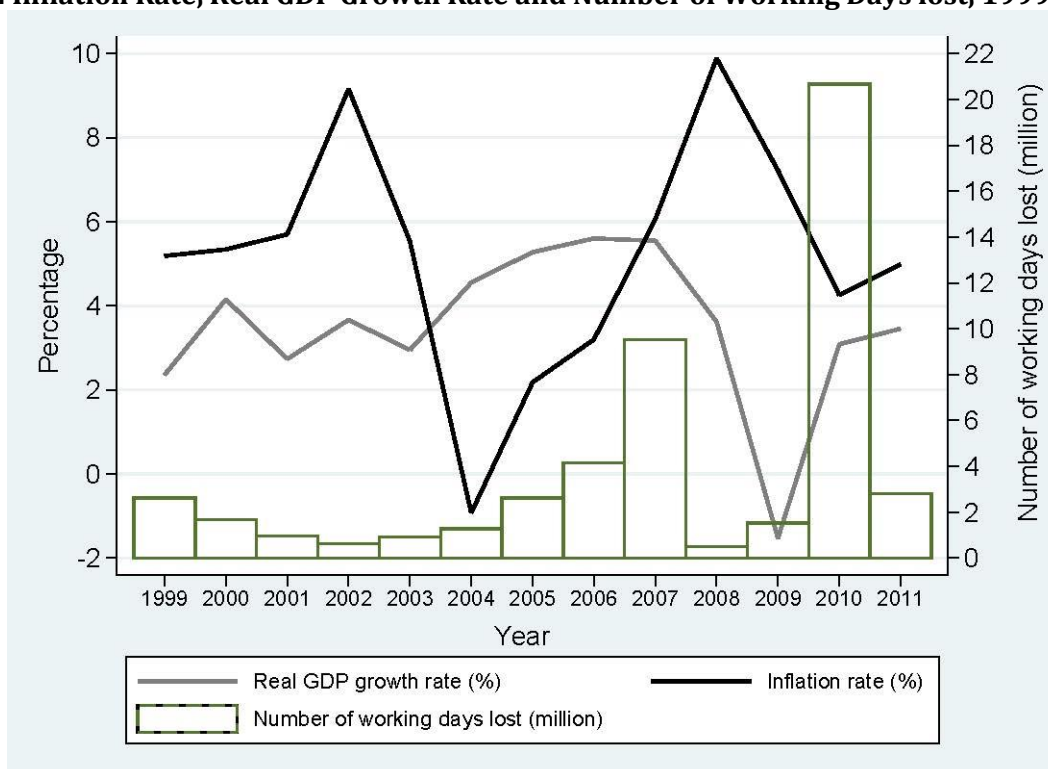
Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2012 and own calculations using OHS, LFS and QLFS data.

While working days lost are a useful gauge of the extent of industrial action in a given year, it is not contextualised within the broader labour market. One way to do this is to relate the number of working days lost to employment. Figure 2 presents the number of working days lost relative to the number of employees in the formal sector, based on data from the relevant October Household (OHS), Labour Force (LFS) and Quarterly Labour Force Surveys (QLFS). Working days lost per formal sector employee follows a similar pattern to that observed earlier. On average, each formal sector employee lost an average of between 0.05 and 0.50 working days per annum due to industrial action over the period, except for 2007 and 2010. In 2007, 1.05 working days were lost per formal sector employee, with 2.30 days lost per employee in 2010.

Inflation rate, Growth in GDP and Working days lost due to Industrial Action

The macroeconomic climate of South Africa is an important factor to consider whilst looking at the nature of industrial action, especially since the chief reason for workers disputes was wages, bonuses and other compensation between 1999 and 2011. Figure 3 below shows the two key macroeconomic indicators: the inflation rate, the real GDP growth rate and the number of working days lost due to industrial action.

Figure 3: Inflation Rate, Real GDP Growth Rate and Number of Working Days lost, 1999 – 2011



Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004 -2012 and own calculations using the real GDP and CPI data from the Quarterly Bulletins of South African Research Bank

The inflation rate for South Africa is derived from the Consumer Price Index (CPI). South Africa uses inflation targeting as a monetary policy framework, it was officially adopted in February 2000 and the target for inflation has been reviewed a few time since then. As of 25 February 2009 the inflation target is a range of 3 to 6 per cent for the year-on-year increase in the CPI (South African Reserve Bank, 2013). From the graph above, it is clear that the inflation rate for South Africa was quite erratic over the time period. While it appears as if there is a link between the number of working days lost and the inflation rate (especially after the public sector strike of 2007 and 2010) there is no statistical evidence of this relationship. The correlation coefficient between the number of strikes and inflation rate (leading by 1 period) is +0.20 over the whole period. The correlation coefficient between the number of days lost due to strikes with compensation being the principle cause and inflation rate (leading by 1 period) is 0.16 over the whole period, indicating a weak statistical relationship between the two indicators. The correlation coefficient between the number of days lost due to strikes and inflation rate (leading by 1 period) is a very strong 0.98, but only for the period 2004-2007.

The average GDP growth rate for the twelve year period was 3.5 percent. The GDP growth rate showed positive growth from 1999 to 2008 until it dipped into the negative region between 2008 and 2009, the result of the global recession. The South African economy experienced strong economic growth between 2004 and 2008 with growth rates ranging from 3.6percent to 4.6 percent. South Africa then underwent its first official post-apartheid recession in 2008/2009. The economy slowly recovered since then, but has not reached the average growth rates in GDP seen in the pre-recession times.

Industrial Action across Industries

Time-loss ratio by industry between 1999 and 2011 is presented in Table 1. This ratio is defined as the number of working days lost due to industrial action per 1 000 formal sector employees. It is the only indicator that can be used reliably to compare strike activity in different countries and industries.

Overall, the time-loss ratio decreased continuously from 1999, before an upward trend took place between 2002 and 2007. The ratio reached 1 051.4 in 2007. After decreasing dramatically in 2008, it increased again and had reached 2 296.4 by 2010. It decreased abruptly to 300.6 in 2011. However, there is significant variation across industries.⁴ For instance, three industries (agriculture, mining and transport) experienced their highest time-loss ratios for the period in 2005, while this was true of two industries (wholesale and retail trade, and financial intermediation) in 2006. In the two years with the highest time-loss ratios – 2007 and 2010 – only one industry experienced its peak ratio: manufacturing in 2007 and community, social and personal services (CSP Services) in 2010.

In seven out of thirteen years, the industry with the highest time-loss ratio was mining, and it can be attributed to the fact that there is no bargaining council within the industry and hence negotiations do not take place on a sectoral level, but companies rather negotiate individually with the Chamber of Mines. This implies that almost every year there is a wage negotiation in this industry, and some companies sign a short one-year wage agreements (Department of Labour, 2010, p.42; 2011, p.40; 2012, p.15). The high ratios in 2003 and 2004 (509.0 and 1 350.1 respectively) were mainly the result of the Impala Platinum strikes in the North West province, while the 2005 ratio (2 290.1) was the result of the nationwide mining strike. The ratio of 265.7 in 2008 can be explained by the strikes in May taking place at the Harmony Gold Mining's Virginia mine, Simmer and Jack mining operations, Aquarius Platinum and DRDGold's Blyvooruiticht Mine, as well as the strikes by 90% of Free State gold mine/workers in July. Furthermore, the high ratio in 2009 (1396.1) was mainly the result of the 14-day strike involving 20 000 employees at Impala Platinum, as well as the gold strike affecting Blyvooruiticht Mine and Crown Gold Recoveries Ltd. Finally, the high ratio in 2011 (1158.7) was mainly the result of the six-day strike of workers at Nkomati Nickel Mine.

⁴ As the Industrial Action Report was only released for the first time in 2004 (for year 2003), it is not possible to find out the reasons accounting for the transport industry having the highest time-loss ratio in 1999 and 2001, the mining industry in 2000 and the community, social and personal services industry in 2002.

Table 1: Time-Loss Ratio by Industry, 1999 - 2011

	Agriculture	Mining	Manufacturing	Electricity	Construction	Wholesale, Retail Trade	Transport	Financial Intermediation	Community Services	Total
1999	124.8	568.9	178.8	11.5	388.6	77.2	1 122.0	0.5	795.8	375.8
2000	15.3	623.9	100.2	14.2	53.7	86.3	301.1	0.0	515.1	231.6
2001	19.3	418.3	307.6	59.9	19.5	0.1	480.0	0.0	56.3	132.4
2002	5.6	172.2	30.3	0.2	9.7	13.2	11.1	0.0	251.6	83.2
2003	38.2	509.0	156.6	251.2	200.7	186.7	132.0	0.2	9.2	121.4
2004	104.8	1 350.1	73.7	2.0	0.0	2.6	180.0	36.4	239.2	166.7
2005	195.7	2 290.1	220.4	4.0	19.1	207.0	1 289.1	9.6	201.6	330.1
2006	80.5	293.7	139.7	168.0	1.7	735.6	389.2	1 155.2	511.1	499.3
2007	49.7	1 260.6	488.9	3.8	82.7	10.0	51.3	7.6	3 614.1	1 051.4
2008	14.9	265.7	44.5	0.0	20.5	8.3	211.1	9.6	82.4	53.1
2009	56.3	1 396.1	212.4	0.6	364.4	14.8	504.4	6.5	94.9	170.1
2010	0.2	1 212.0	264.8	78.7	5.6	223.6	1 263.3	11.1	8 126.6	2 296.4
2011	31.8	1 158.7	558.3	1.0	39.7	27.9	103.4	0.7	590.9	300.6
Unweighted Mean	56.7	886.1	213.6	45.8	92.8	122.6	464.5	95.2	1 160.7	447.1

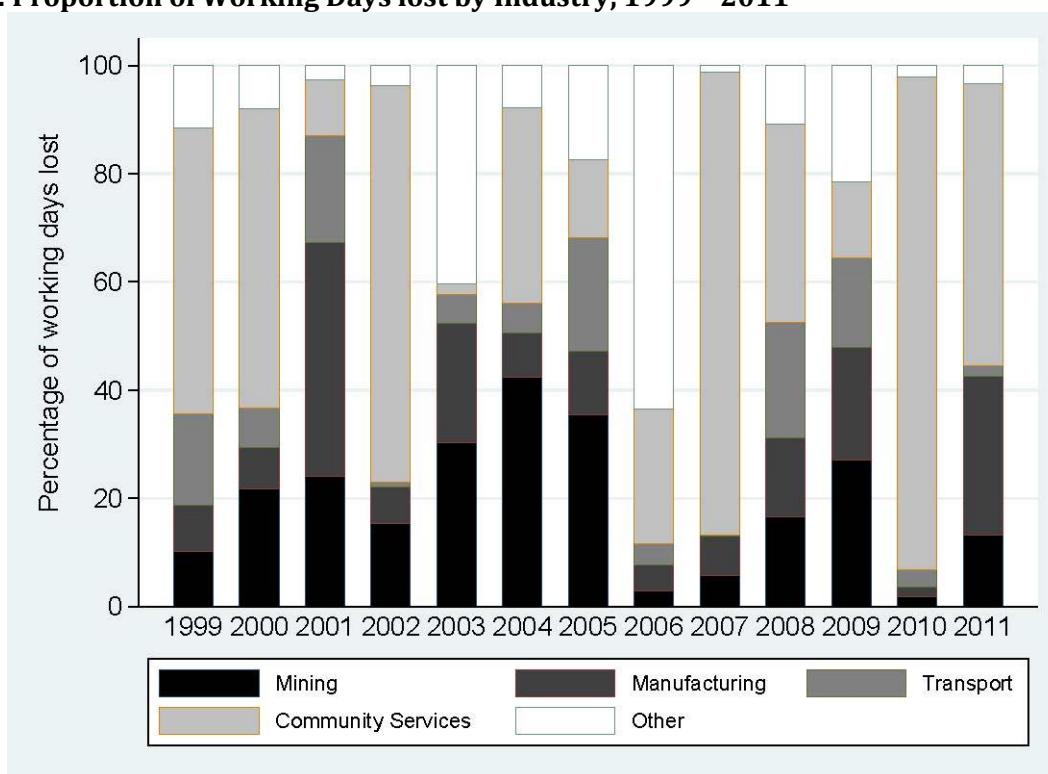
Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2012 and own calculations using OHS, LFS and QLFS data.

In 2006, the time-loss ratio was highest in financial intermediation (1 155.2), followed by wholesale and retail trade (735.6). These two results were mainly driven by strikes by security guards and Shoprite/Checkers workers respectively. CSP Services industry had the highest time-loss ratio in two years, namely 2007 and 2010, the result of industrial action by public service workers.

Finally, there are few points to note about the trends in individual sectors. First, a time-loss ratio of at least 1 200 is observed in the mining industry in all but two years since 2004; secondly, significant actions in electricity and construction industries only occurred twice each (2003 and 2006 for the former, 1999 and 2009 for the latter); finally, very little industrial action took place in financial intermediation, as the time-loss ratio was lower than 40 in all years but 2006. Given the nature of industrial action, trends are difficult to identify given the relatively short period.

Variations in numbers of workers involved and the duration of industrial actions means that there may be significant variation in the degree of concentration of working days lost across industries over time. The distribution of workdays lost across industries between 1999 and 2010 is presented in Figure 3. The figure highlights the four industries responsible for the largest numbers of workdays lost over the entire period, namely mining; manufacturing; transport and CSP Services. Over the 13-year period, industrial action in CSP Services accounted for 67.4 percent of all working days lost. This high share of days lost means that the other three sectors lag far behind: 9.0 percent of days lost occurred in mining, 7.8 percent in manufacturing, and 5.4 percent in transport. In fact, for six out of the thirteen years, CSP Services accounted for more than half of working days lost due to industrial action. Even more dramatically, in 2002, 2007 and 2010, CSP Services industry accounted for more than seven out of ten working days lost due to industrial action (73.4 percent, 85.6 percent and 91.3 percent respectively). The high share of working days lost in 2007 is the result of the public service strike in June 2007, while work stoppages in the three spheres of government in 2010 amounted to a loss of 18.9 million working days. The 2007 wage agreement between the state and public sector union was still in place in 2009 and could explain the sector's significantly lower share of all working days lost for that year (14.9 percent) and, consequently, only local government employees went on strike in 2009 (Department of Labour, 2011, p.30).

Figure 4: Proportion of Working Days lost by Industry, 1999 – 2011



Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2012

Only two other industries accounted for more than one-third of working days lost in a given year: manufacturing (43.3 percent in 2001) and mining (42.4 percent in 2004 and 35.5 percent in 2005). After CSP Services, most working days lost due to industrial action occurred within the mining sector, and it has ranked second in terms of working days lost in seven out of the thirteen years. The high portion of working days lost due to industrial action in mining in 2005 could be attributed to a multi-employer strike in the gold sector (Department of Labour, 2006, p.11).

Even though the other industries contributed a relatively insignificant number of working days lost due to industrial action when compared to the CSP Services industry, a substantial number of days were lost in those sectors in 2010. The total amount of working days lost due to industrial action in 2010 was 20.7 million working days, of which 18.9 million working days were attributed to the public sector. Industries that were hit by industrial action in 2010 included transport (640 577 working days or 3.1 percent) of days lost; wholesale and retail trade (394 584 working days or 1.9 percent); manufacturing (384 980 working days or 1.9 percent) and mining (361 113 working days lost or 1.7 percent). A large portion of the working days lost in the transport sector was due to the Transnet strike, while the national strikes which affected Dis-Chem and Pick ‘n Pay explain the loss of working days in the wholesale and retail sector (Department of Labour, 2011, p.30).

Industries that have seen relatively few working days lost to industrial action over the period include agriculture, which has contributed less than five percent of working days lost over the period; electricity, which peaked at 2.4 percent of all working days lost in 2003; and financial intermediation, which, with the exception of 2006, lost very few working days due to industrial action between 1999 and 2011. Low figures in these sectors are the function of either their relatively small size, or the relative lack of lengthy and widespread industrial action, or a combination of these factors.

Industrial Action across Trade Unions

Related to the analysis of industrial action across economic sectors, this section looks at the relative shares of working day lost across trade unions. **Error! Reference source not found.** ranks the top five unions in terms of working days lost in industrial action annually between 2004 and 2011. There are 18 unions in total that are identified in the table out of 55 unions for which data was recorded over the period. Six of the 18 unions appear three times or more over the eight years. NUM and SATAWU were both ranked in the top five in six of the eight years, SAMWU was ranked in the top five in four of the seven years and NEHAWU; NUMSA and SACCAWU each appeared in three years.

Table 2: The Share of Working Days lost by Trade unions, 2004 – 2011

	Ranked No.1	Ranked No.2	Ranked No.3	Ranked No.4	Ranked No.5	Other	Total
2004	NUM 33.0%	SATAWU 17.9%	NEHAWU 17.8%	PSA 7.4%	NUMSA 6.9%	17.0%	100.0%
2005	NUM 35.2%	SATAWU 21.0%	SACCAWU 12.1%	SAMWU 8.1%	FAWU 5.3%	18.3%	100.0%
2006	SATAWU 41.5%	SACCAWU 14.6%	TAWU 13.8%	FAWU 7.8%	NUM 5.0%	17.3%	100.0%
2007	NEHAWU 8.6%	HOSPERSA 8.6%	NUPSAW 8.5%	POPCRU 8.5%	NATU 8.5%	57.3%	100.0%
2008	SAMWU 33.0%	NUM 22.7%	SATAWU 17.1%	NUMSA 9.1%	SACCAWU 2.8%	15.3%	100.0%
2009	NUM 35.2%	SACTWU 14.5%	SATAWU 8.7%	BCAWU 8.7%	SAMWU 6.1%	26.8%	100.0%
2010	NEHAWU 18.7%	PSA 16.4%	SADTU 16.3%	POPCRU 10.9%	DENOSA 5.5%	32.2%	100.0%
2011	SATAWU 44.6%	Solidarity Union 24.0%	NUMSA 9.2%	NUM 5.9%	SAMWU 4.7%	11.6%	100.0%

Source: Industrial Action Report, 2005 -2012

The composition of strikes by industry was very different in 2007, where there was a low concentration of strikes in the sector, but a high number of working days lost, pointing to widespread industrial action in that year (although largely in CSP Services). There was also relatively low variation in the type of sectors that participated in industrial action in 2010, where again, the high number of days lost was focussed in the CSP Services industry. The dominance of the public sector unions in 2007 and 2010 are thus to be expected since a significant portion of the working days lost was attributed to the CSP Services industry.

Industrial Action by Principle Cause of Dispute

The main causes of industrial action in South Africa, between 1999 and 2011, are described in Table 3 and Figure A.1 in the Appendix. Unsurprisingly, disputes around wages, bonuses and other compensation are the chief reason for industrial action over the period. It was the leading cause for industrial action in every year under consideration typically accounting for at least 50 percent of main cause of dispute. However, in 2000, retrenchments or redundancy was the main reason for dispute (61.3 percent).

Table 3: The Principle Causes of Dispute of Industrial Action, 1999 - 2011

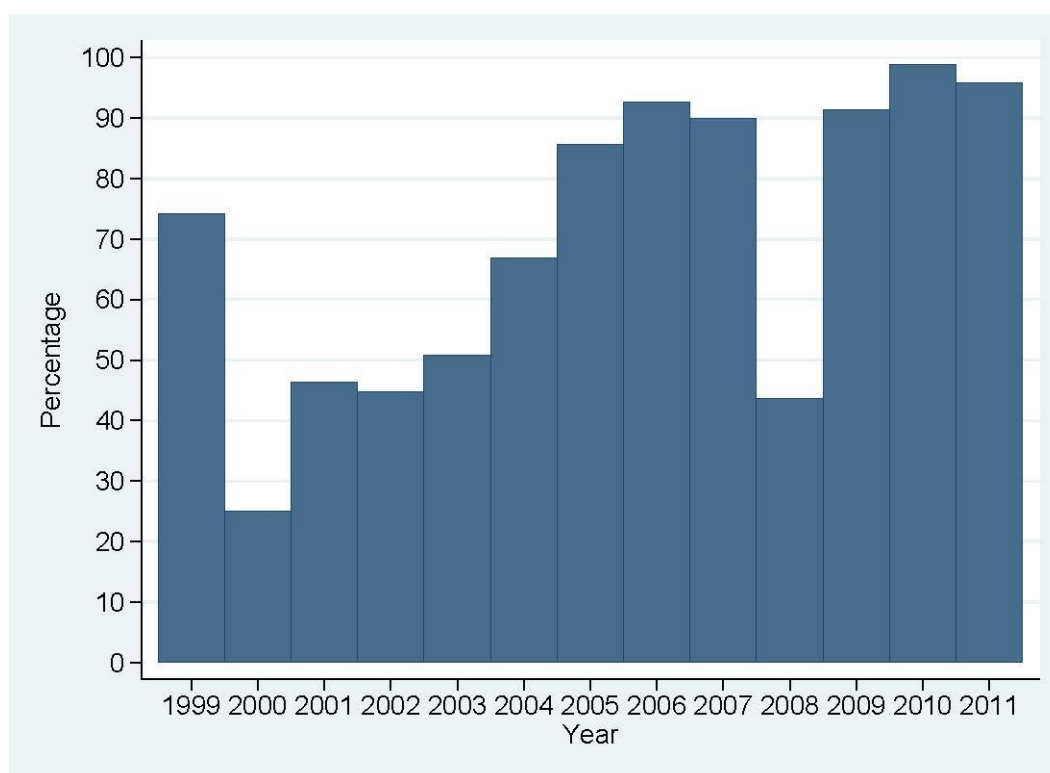
	Wages, bonus and other compensation	Working conditions	Disciplinary matters	Grievances	Socio-economic and political conditions	Retrenchments /redundancy	Other reasons	Total
1999	74.2%	5.0%	5.0%	3.6%	3.3%	2.0%	7.0%	100.0%
2000	25.0%	1.3%	1.3%	2.5%	3.8%	61.3%	5.2%	100.0%
2001	46.3%	21.3%	2.5%	11.3%	6.3%	5.0%	6.3%	100.0%
2002	44.7%	23.4%	8.5%	4.3%	2.1%	6.4%	10.6%	100.0%
2003	50.8%	18.5%	12.3%	10.8%	1.4%	1.5%	4.7%	100.0%
2004	66.9%	2.7%	1.1%	6.8%	21.0%	1.6%	0.0%	100.0%
2005	85.6%	3.4%	0.8%	5.3%	0.0%	1.7%	3.2%	100.0%
2006	92.7%	0.1%	0.1%	1.1%	5.4%	0.4%	0.2%	100.0%
2007	89.9%	6.4%	0.1%	0.9%	0.0%	0.5%	2.2%	100.0%
2008	43.7%	2.0%	0.2%	11.1%	37.6%	0.1%	5.3%	100.0%
2009	91.3%	4.5%	0.3%	2.6%	1.0%	0.2%	0.2%	100.0%
2010	98.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.7%	100.0%
2011	95.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.1%	0.0%	3.2%	100.0%

Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004 -2012

After wages, bonuses and other compensation, disputes about working conditions were a prominent reason for industrial action for the years 2001 to 2003. Disciplinary matters and grievances were also two reasons (12.3 percent and 10.8 percent respectively) for industrial action in 2003. In 2008, socio-economic and political conditions, standing at 37.6 percent, broke the trend of wages, bonuses and other compensation being the most significant reason for industrial action. COSATU were protesting against the general increase in price levels and load shedding, and thus socio-economic and political conditions stood out as one of the main reasons for dispute (Department of Labour, 2009, p.40). Socio-economic and political conditions was also one of the main reasons for dispute in 2004, where it accounted for 21.0 percent of the causes of dispute. These findings are in line with those in the COSATU Survey where the majority of respondents indicated that they wanted better pay from their employers. The COSATU Survey also found that there was a distinction between younger and older workers: younger workers (those aged between 19 and 29 years) preferred increased remuneration, benefits and job security, while older workers (those aged between 30 and 65 years) placed greater importance on fair treatment and better working conditions (Naledi, 2012, page 10).

It is clear that the main reason for dispute between 1999 and 2011 was related to wages, bonuses and compensation (Figure 4). Even more noticeable is that it increasingly became the most important reason for industrial action, rising from 74.2 percent in 1999 to 95.8 percent in 2011. It peaked in 2010 at 98.8 percent. There were however two dips in the series, one in 2000 and another in 2008 where the primary reason for striking was retrenchments and socio-economic and political conditions respectively. In addition, an upward trend took place between 2002 and 2006, as the percentage of strikers declaring compensation as main reason for dispute rising from 44.7 percent to 92.7 percent.

Figure 5: The Percentage of Strikers listing Compensation as Main Reason for Dispute, 1999 - 2011



Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004 -2012

Wages, bonuses and other compensation made up more than ninety percent of the reason for industrial action from 2006 and onwards, and in 2010 it accounted for 98.8 percent. Put differently, 20.4 million working days were lost in 2010 because of disputes relating to compensation in the public sector. Similarly in 2009, 91.2 percent or 1.4 million work days were lost due to disputes around compensation. The loss in working days in 2009 was mainly ascribed to national strikes that occurred in 2009 which were linked to local government, the construction sector, road freight sector, chemical and pharmaceutical sectors and Impala Platinum (Department of Labour, 2010, p.38).

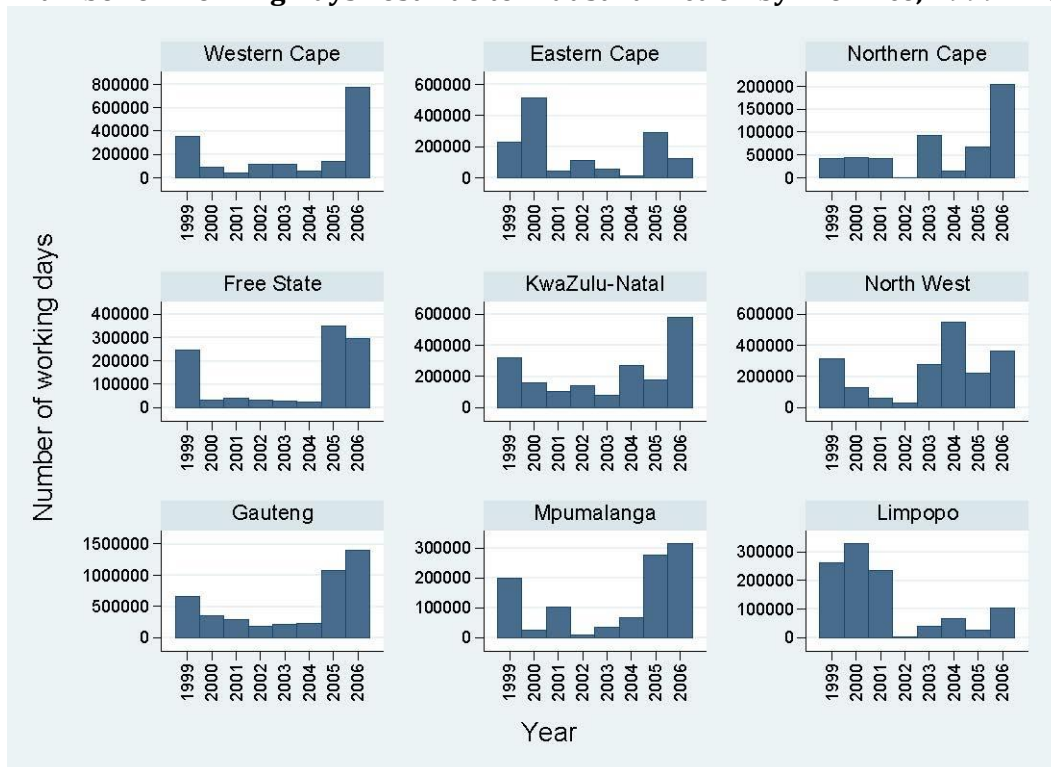
Industrial Action across Provinces

Figure 6 shows the number of working days lost by province between 1999 and 2006. As the Industrial Action Reports were only released by DoL since 2003, detailed reasons behind the high number of working days lost in some provinces in 1999-2002 is not available. Also, since 2007, information on working days lost by province was no longer released. Nonetheless, it can be seen that the highest number of working days lost occurred in Gauteng in most of the years. Also, working days lost were particularly high in Limpopo in the 1999-2001 period and the Eastern Cape in 1999 and 2000.

In 2003, the North West recorded the highest number of work days lost due to protracted industrial action affecting Impala Platinum Refinery in Rustenburg and a construction strike on certain platinum mines (Department of Labour, 2004, p.2). In 2004, the number of working days lost due to industrial action was mainly accounted for by the North West province, due to the strikes affecting the major platinum producers, such as Anglo plant and Impala Platinum in September of that year. Two large strikes accounted for just over half (54%) of all workdays lost during 2003. These were the strikes at Impala Platinum Refinery in the Rustenburg area and a national strike in Shoprite-Checkers. (Department of Labour, 2005: pp.v-vi).

In 2005, Gauteng accounted for 41.1 percent of work days lost, largely due to national strikes that occurred in the road freight industry, amongst municipal workers, in the glass industry, at Pick 'n Pay and in gold mining (Department of Labour, 2006, pp.vi-vii). Finally, in 2006, Gauteng once again accounted for the highest share (33.8 percent), largely due to national strikes involving security guards, Shoprite/Checkers, contract cleaners and Sun International (Department of Labour, 2007, p.2).

Figure 6: Number of Working Days Lost Due to Industrial Action by Province, 1999 – 2006



Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2007

Figure 6 shows the time-loss ratios by province between 1999 and 2006. Nonetheless, the highest ratio occurred in Limpopo in 1999-2001, North West in 2003-2004, Free State in 2005 and Northern Cape in 2006. This ratio was extremely low across all provinces in 2002. The high time-loss ratio in North West in 2003 (495.5) was due to protracted industrial action affecting Impala Platinum Refinery in Rustenburg (Department of Labour, 2004, p.2), while the ratio more than doubled to 1020.8 in 2004, mainly due to the strikes affecting the major platinum producers. The time-loss ratio was the highest in Free State in 2005 (646.9) as a result of the repetitive strikes by workers at the Harmony gold mine (Department of Labour, 2006: p.13). This explains why Free State's share of working days lost was unusually high at 13.3% in 2005 (to be explained in Table 4 later). Finally, Northern Cape was the surprisingly the province with the highest time-loss ratio (921.2) in 2006, and this could be attributed to the abrupt increase of the number of working days lost between 2005 and 2006 by 203.9 percent (Department of Labour, 2007, p.27).

Table 4 and Figure A.2 in the Appendix show the provincial share of the working days lost between 1999 and 2006, and it can be seen that the share was the highest in Gauteng share in five out of eight years (1999, 2001, 2002, 2005 and 2006). In the remaining three years, the dominant provinces were the North West (2003 and 2004) and the Eastern Cape (2000).

Table 4: Distribution of Working days lost by Province, 1999 -2006

	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	Total	Top Three Provinces
1999	13.5%	8.8%	1.6%	9.3%	12.1%	11.9%	25.2%	7.5%	10.0%	100.0%	50.9%
2000	5.4%	30.8%	2.6%	1.9%	9.5%	7.7%	21.1%	1.5%	19.6%	100.0%	71.5%
2001	4.1%	4.4%	4.3%	4.2%	10.9%	6.2%	30.4%	10.7%	24.8%	100.0%	66.1%
2002	18.9%	17.6%	0.1%	4.8%	23.1%	4.8%	29.6%	1.1%	0.1%	100.0%	71.5%
2003	12.3%	5.8%	10.0%	2.9%	8.2%	30.2%	22.6%	3.8%	4.2%	100.0%	62.8%
2004	4.6%	1.0%	1.1%	1.7%	20.9%	42.6%	17.8%	5.1%	5.2%	100.0%	81.3%
2005	5.2%	11.1%	2.6%	13.3%	6.8%	8.4%	41.1%	10.4%	1.0%	100.0%	65.5%
2006	18.7%	2.9%	4.9%	7.1%	13.9%	8.7%	33.8%	7.5%	2.5%	100.0%	66.3%

Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2007

With the exception of Gauteng, there is variability in the results with no province dominating in terms of the share of working days lost in South Africa. The industrial composition of employment for each of the provinces plays an important role in the scale of the labour disputes experienced. For instance, North West and Gauteng are the two provinces accounting for the highest share of workers in the mining industry (about 30% and 25% respectively, during the 1999-2006 period) while nearly a quarter of CSP Services workers reside in Gauteng. Since the working days lost are the highest in CSP Services and mining as discussed in the previous section on industrial action across industries, this explains why the proportional working days were the highest in either of the two provinces in all but one year in 1999-2006.

Conclusion

Although there is a slight upward trend of the number of working days lost to industrial action between 1999 and 2011 (rising from 2.6 million to 2.8 million), significant variation took place over time. In particular, the number of working days lost increased drastically to 20.7 million in 2010, caused by the public sector strikes.

The four industries responsible for the largest share of working days lost over the 12 year period were mining, manufacturing, the transport sector and CSP services. Overall, the CSP sector accounted for more than two-thirds of all working days lost, while the other three industries individually accounted for less than ten percent.

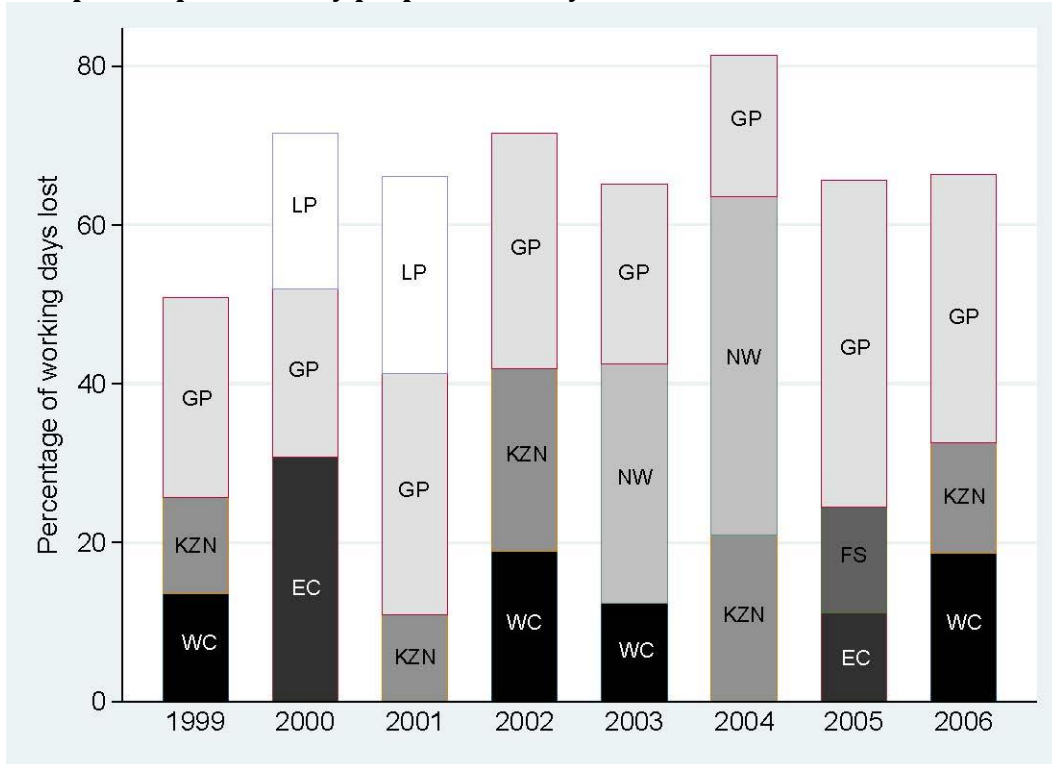
Disputes around wages, bonuses and other compensation were the main reason for industrial action over the 13-year period. Other less, but also unmistakable reasons for industrial action between 1999 and 2011, include disputes about working conditions (2001 and 2003), socio-economic and political reasons (2004 and 2008), disciplinary matters (2003) and grievances (2003).

The highest number of working days lost was concentrated in Gauteng. A significant number of working days lost were also found in Limpopo (1999 – 2001) and the Eastern Cape (1999 and 2000). In terms of the share of working days lost, the North West and Gauteng feature quite prominently. There is a clear link between the industrial composition of a province and the share of working days lost in industrial action. Gauteng and the North West are two provinces known for their mining and they also account for the highest share of workers in the mining industry. Furthermore, a significant portion of CSP Services sector workers reside in Gauteng, and thus, it makes sense why a large share of working days lost in industrial action would take place in these provinces.

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Figure A.2: Top three provinces by proportional days lost



Source: Industrial Action Report, 2004-2007