

TIGER C19

Timely Integration of User
Generated Responses about C19

Introduction and Approach

WHAT: TIGER C19 is an ongoing collaboration between the Burnet Institute and the University of Melbourne that combines big data analytics of social media postings with qualitative research methods.

HOW: Using a sophisticated data analytics tool, TIGER C19 extracts posts containing selected key terms or topics from two social media platforms: “Reddit” and “Twitter”. The resulting data are then subjected to thematic analyses, as presented below.

WHY: TIGER C19 informs public health and health information responses by examining local Covid-related issues of current interest as both a supplement and complement to other research and intelligence. The current focus is on Victoria, though the emerging themes have broader resonance and application to other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas.

Summary of results

Table 1 below summarises findings for the key words, focusing on the top 20 URLs and the most popular upvoted (Reddit) or retweeted (Twitter) posts using the key terms or topics as listed in Table 1.

Data collection period: 25 November – 5 December

Total number of hits/posts: 36,411

Table 1: Summary of Reddit and Twitter ‘captures’ by key words

Term/Topic	Posts	Term/Topic	Posts
Antivax	451	Protests	5,641
Boosters	2,121	Travel	3,976
Freedom	6,137	Vaccines	12,536
Human Rights	454	Omicron	5,095

Emerging themes

We analysed the most popular posts (and repost trails) to determine emerging key themes.

1. The antivax movement is diverse and complex

- Groups determined to continue protesting (even as “theatre”), although prepared to be vaccinated.
- Broad mix of rationale: freedom of choice; anti-government dictates; distrust of science.
- Right-wing group infiltration and momentum.
- Fueled by neo-Nazi and other extremist groups with wide array of flags and emblems
- First Nation hesitancy in context of colonial history of health interventions.

2. Social and other media utilized as powerful influencers

- Right-wing media promoting anti-government sentiment and protests.
- Use of false social media accounts to boost anti-vax/anti-government movement.
- Bots employed to boost anti-vax/“freedom” protest agendas and events.
- Personal accounts from health workers describing consequences of non-vaccination.

3. Conflicting concepts and interpretations of freedom and human rights

- Liberal = freedom; Labor = lockdown/repression.
- Can be both against government coercion and be pro-vaccination.
- Concern that pandemic powers/law in hands of politicians and away from health professionals.
- Concern of new lockdown threat and impact on renewed freedoms.
- Uncertainty around shifting parameters of freedom (vaccination doses and then booster).
- Power shifting to Premier in Victoria.
- Human rights can be interpreted as individual right not to be infected by others.

4. Desire to hear from broad array of voices/perspectives

- Importance of listening to reason and community voices.
- Desire to hear from wider range of experiences/issues: eg Melbourne cafe owners, personal trainers.
- Weary of hearing from same voices: politicians/health experts/epidemiologists.
- Too much air space given to protesters (less than half-percent of Victoria’s population).

5. Travel planning difficult to negotiate

- Confusion as to testing requirements (international/interstate).
- Impact of Omicron variant on travel options.
- Difficult to plan ahead in current climate.

6. Vaccination issues are central to many of the debates and feeds.

- Right wing misinformation on vaccination issues permeates all media.
- Confusion as to who needs booster vaccinations and when they can be obtained.
- Unvaccinated people should not receive treatment if services are at their limits.
- Melbourne scientists create mRNA vaccine to combat new strains.
- Omicron as a sign that new more virulent variants are inevitable.
- Impact of Omicron and subsequent variants on medical/social/economic progress.
- Need to learn from this pandemic and plan now for the future.