

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 most popular upvoted (Reddit) or retweeted (Twitter) posts using the key terms or topics as listed in Table 1.

Data collection period: 6 – 7 January 2022

Total number of hits/posts: 29,882

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

Term/Topic	Posts	Term/Topic	Posts
Booster	4,138	Exemption	6,419
Rules	4,702	Omicron	4,659
Testing	6,313	Rapid Tests	4,702

Emerging themes

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

1. The Omicron outbreak has seriously impacted the health system

- Variety of health professionals provide personal accounts of burn-out and stress.
- Major impact of Covid response on other critical areas of health need.
- Concern that mixed messaging is creating inappropriate hospital presentations.
- Inappropriate to utilize graduate nurses and doctors who require intensive close supervision.

2. Need for certainty and equity regarding rules and regulations concerning Covid

- The debate around sports players and other high-profile people highlights inequity.
- Needs to be clarity around travel rules and impartial implementation.
- Confusion when more than one agency or government authority interprets rules.
- No individual should be above current rules pertaining to Covid.

3. Lack of confidence in government handling of the Omicron outbreak

- Concern around relaxing regulations for Christmas and New Year in the face of Omicron.
- Shifting health advice leads to individuals ignoring health advice.
- Government reliance on science/public health advice not so apparent regarding Omicron.
- Using hotels rather than building specialist quarantine facilities a cause for concern.

4. Access to testing and test technology continues to challenge

- Abiding by testing regulations is complicated when problems exist in attaining a test.
- Problems in accessing testing and technology mirrors government tardiness over vaccine roll-out.
- Free tests should be integral component of universal health care system.
- Accounts of retailers inflating prices for Rapid Antigen Tests.

5. Social and economic impact of Omicron outbreak magnified

- Numerous personal accounts of impacts of Covid infection and isolation due to close contact status.
- “Shadow lockdown” having substantial effect on viability of small businesses.
- Major difficulties in obtaining a PCR test as a requirement for worker compensation claim.
- Supply chain problems and economic ramifications due to sick and isolating workforce.

6. Uncertainty for the future

- Demand for clarity, based on science, regarding the booster program and potential for new vaccines.
- Worry concerning health impacts of Omicron and possibility of Long Covid.
- Increasing number of narratives around psychological impact of ongoing pandemic.
- Difficulty in planning ahead in such unpredictable times.