Social media analysis shows support for public health measures

October 22 2021

Data collection period: 6 October – 15 October 2021

Total number of hits/posts: 68,599

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

Term/Topic	Posts	Term/Topic	Posts
Choice	6,127	Control	5,966
Fear	5,293	Fines	888
Passport	3,927	Protest	5,416
Travel	5,590	Vaccine	8,356
Demonstration	2,394	Government	7,247
Roadmap	2,439	Fatigue	595
Lockdown	7,895	Rules	6,466

Credit: Burnet Institute

Analysis of social media posts in October 2021 shows Australian users are fatigued with experiencing extended lockdowns, but understanding and support for the public health measures and vaccines.

The TIGER C19 project, run collaboratively between Burnet Institute and the University of Melbourne has combined big data analytics of selected keywords and themes from Reddit and Twitter since the onset of COVID-19.

TIGER C19 Co-Lead Investigator, Professor Robert Power and his team collated and analyzed nearly 70,000 Twitter and Reddit posts from 6–15 October 2021 which contained 14 separate keywords relating to current COVID-19-related issues.

Professor Power said the project offers real-time insights into the sentiment of Australian social media users, and gauges attitudes and responses to public health measures implemented to limit the effects of the pandemic.

"Overall, this latest snapshot reflects the mixed impact of another extended lockdown," Professor Power said. "Although there was understanding and support for the measures put in place, this was combined with a strong sense of lockdown fatigue and concern as to its impact on individuals, social cohesion and the economy."

Professor Power said while there was frustration among posters with restrictions and lockdowns, social media users were anxious about the potential impacts of protests against these restrictions.

"Numerous posts expressed concern over the anti-lockdown protests and demonstrations, the violence that resulted, and fear of escalation," he said.

He said social media posters were also aware of inequalities emerging in responses.

"Others noted the disparity between policing of certain suburbs and sub-groups of the population, whilst rule breaking was taking place elsewhere with seeming impunity. Indeed, some viewed blatant non-compliance with lockdown rules as a form of silent protest," Professor Power said.

As Victoria and New South Wales emerge from extended lockdowns with COVID-19 still present in the community, Professor Power said social media posts suggested there was uncertainty over what comes next.

"Moving forward, worry was expressed over mixed messaging and uncertainty as to how post-lockdown Victoria will be managed," he said.

Professor Power said the TIGER C19 analysis was a powerful tool because of the timeliness in which it could amalgamate information.

"TIGER C19 is a vibrant tool that turns an average of 80,000 posts/reposts into a focused three-page report in under ten days," he said.

"By repeating these exercises in real-time, and by expanding the search terms, we've been able to closely monitor responses and attitudes to COVID-19 in Victoria and Australia.

"In this way and freed from the constraints of more traditional social research methods, TIGER C19 offers a novel and innovative means to observe and measure the pulse of the community."

 More information: The report is available online: [burnet.edu.au/system/asset/fil … 19_2021_Report_7.pdf](burnet.edu.au/system/asset/fil)

Provided by Burnet Institute