

VACCINE MIS/DISINFORMATION

WEEKLY REPORT

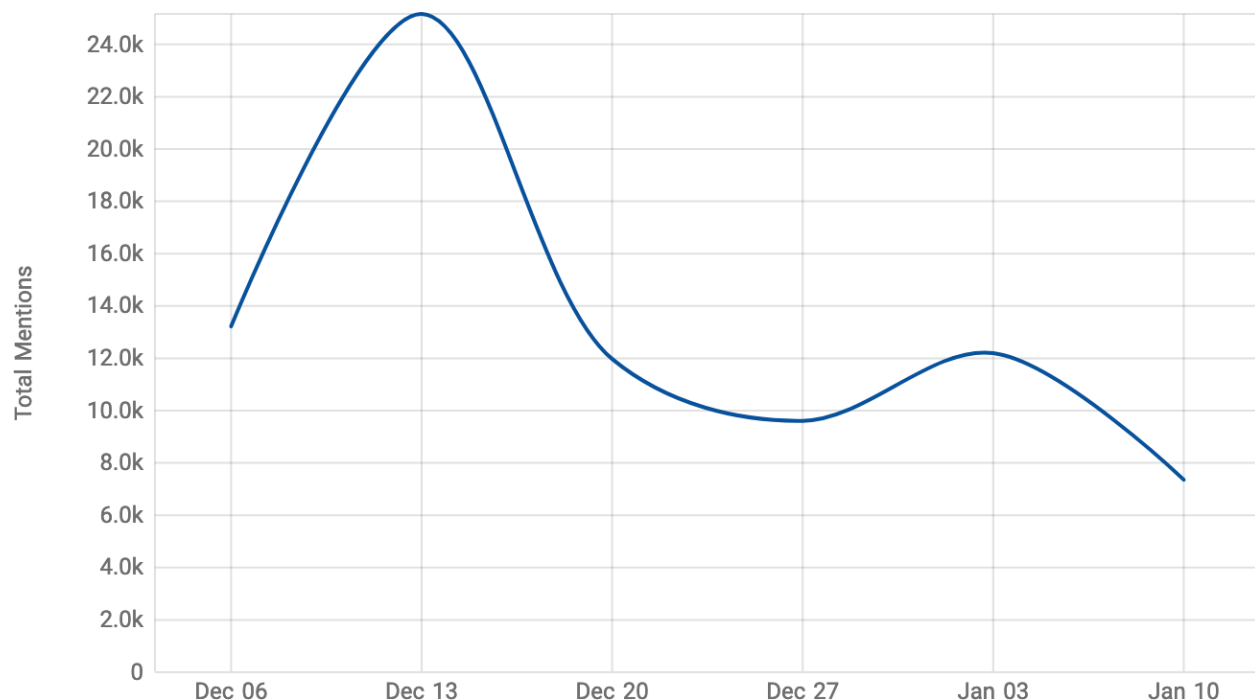
This Vaccine Mis/Disinformation report looks into the last four weeks of social media conversations. These were driven by: claims of severe vaccine injuries and/or deaths, new research related to side-effects, frustrations due to vaccine mandates, erosion of public trust, miseducation and confusion.

14 January Summary:

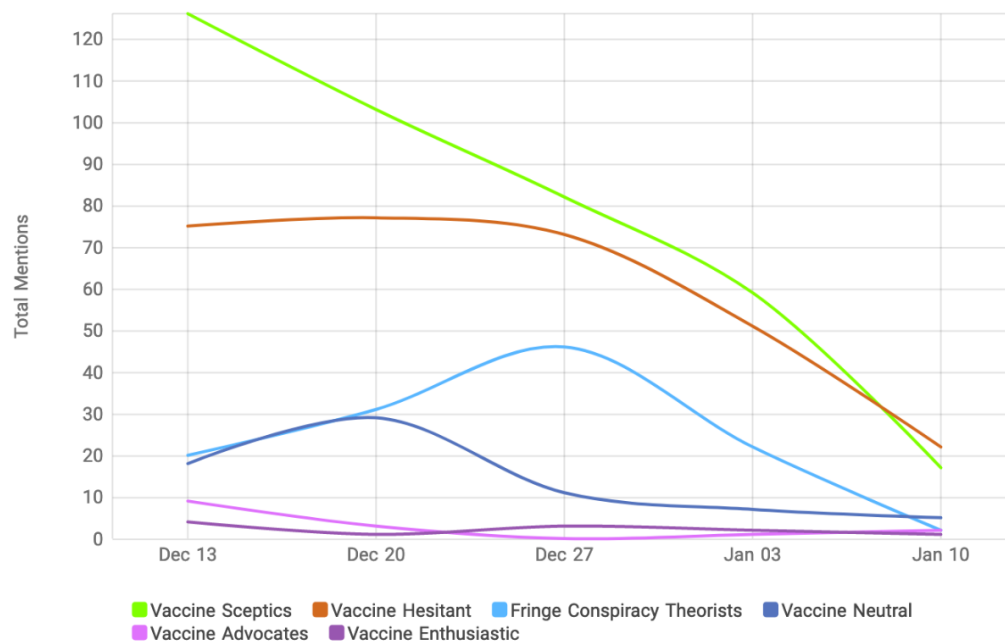
- **Vaccine injuries and deaths**
- **Side-effects of the vaccine in children**
- **Discrimination against the unvaccinated and erosion of public trust**
- **Those who are vaccinated were fooled**
- **How effective is the vaccine really?**
- **Misinformation and miseducation about the vaccine**
- **Vaccines are a money-making scheme**
- **Alternatives to the vaccine**
- **COVID-19 has been highly exaggerated**
- **Travelling during the pandemic**

Part 1

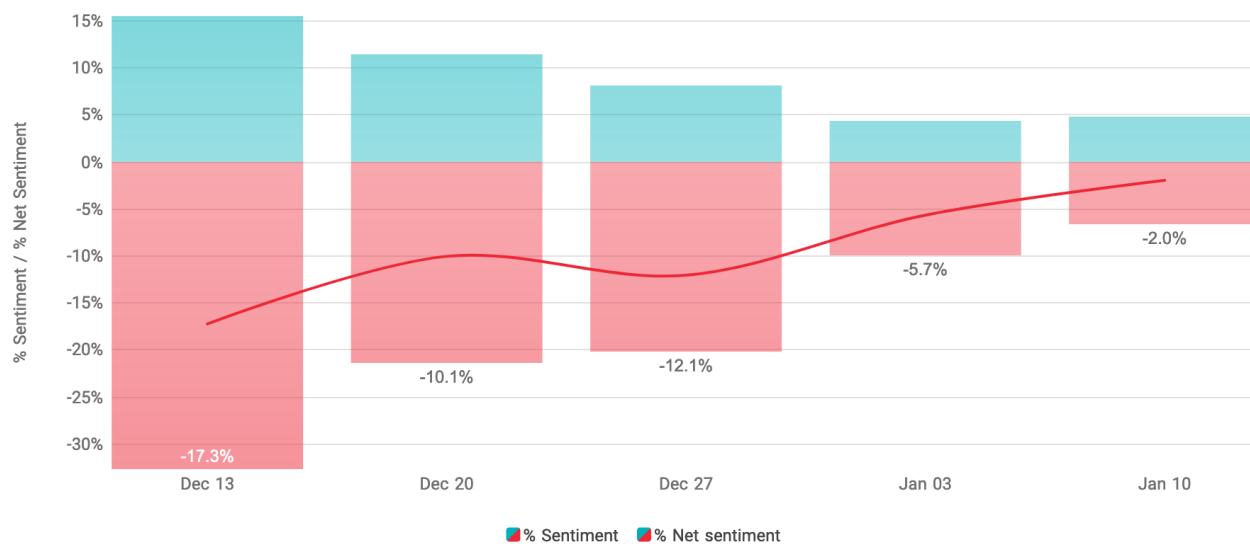
Over the last four weeks, Twitter conversations surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine declined in mid-December 2021 and have since remained relatively steady in terms of volume right into January 2022. See the graph below:



The graph below illustrates the different tones of the Twitter online conversation according to our vaccine trust spectrum. The general volume declined into January, but remains steady. It is worthwhile to note that vaccine hesitancy and vaccine skepticism have been the most prominent:



The graph below shows the overall net sentiment of mentions over Mid-December and well into January. The blue indicates positive sentiments and the red indicates negative sentiments. Most of the sentiments over this period have been in the negative zone:

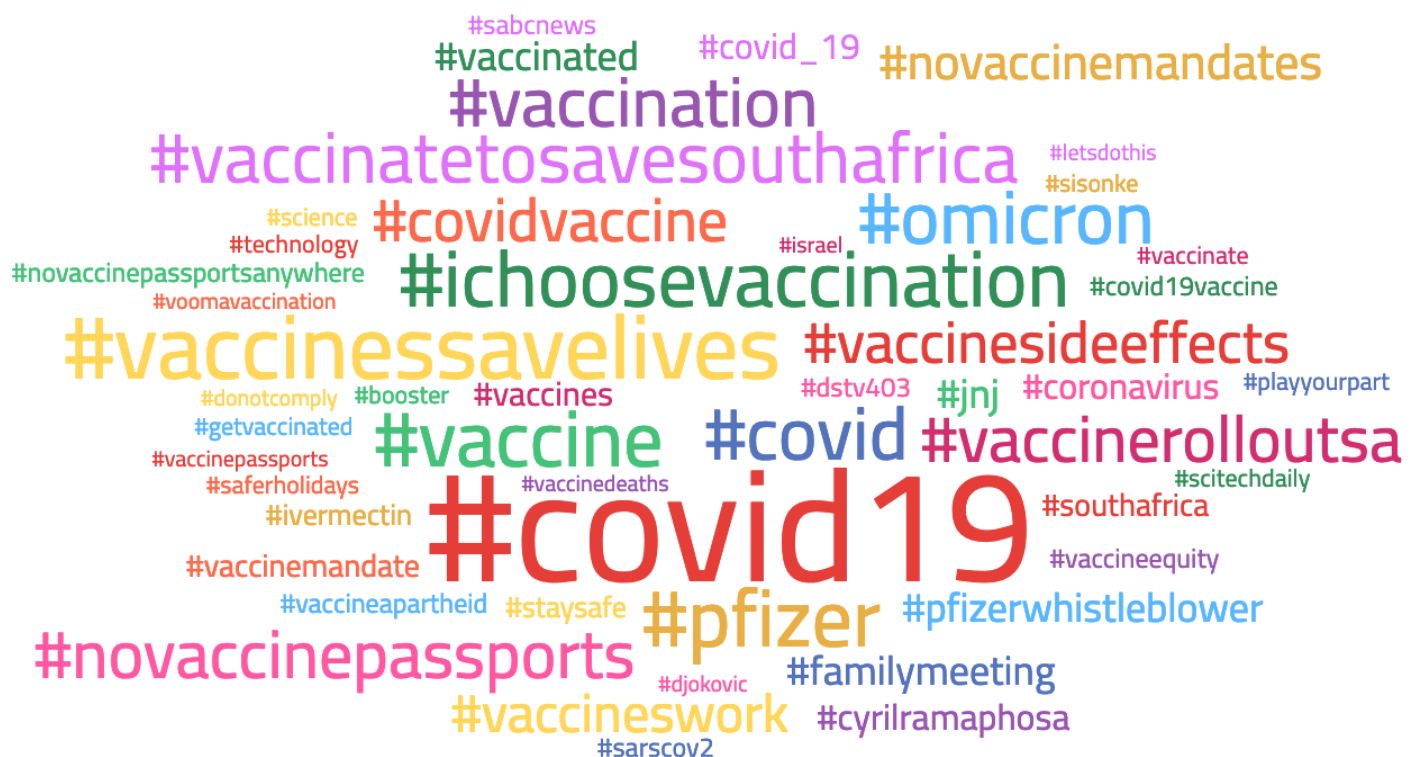


This table below goes even further by unpacking a variety of factors such as engagement, opportunities to see, sentiment etc. Draw your attention to volume column; here you clearly see that the top three drivers in volume are vaccine hesitancy, vaccine skepticism and fringe conspiracy theories:

	Volume	Engagement	OTS	Sentiment	Authors	Followers	Conversations	Engagement Rate
Vaccine Sceptics	43.0% <div></div>	238	2 486 452	-99.0%	321	306 843	335	0.6
Vaccine Hesitant	33.0% <div></div>	214	1 474 785	-66.3%	250	306 843	264	0.7
Fringe Conspiracy Theorists	13.4% <div></div>	14	612 837	-95.0%	99	152 580	119	0.1
Vaccine Neutral	7.8% <div></div>	15	397 404	-11.4%	65	152 322	65	0.2
Vaccine Advocates	1.7% <div></div>	3	3 137 372	100.0%	15	3 112 639	15	0.2
Vaccine Enthusiastic	1.2% <div></div>	0	14 378	81.8%	11	5 172	11	0.0

Part 2

Recent online conversations around the vaccine have demonstrated a range of attitudes towards the vaccine - both against and pro-vaccine. See the word cloud below:



As discussed in Part 1, recent online conversations have been largely driven by vaccine hesitancy and vaccine skepticism. This section will unpack some of the top trending issues that were picked up by our analysts. These topics will also be accompanied by dialogue facilitation suggestions highlighted in *italics*:

Vaccine injuries and deaths

Conversations driven by claims of severe vaccine injuries and deaths gained considerable traction online. In early January, these conversations became particularly prominent.

For example, the [post](#) below shares a video claiming that the woman depicted “experienced paralysis” and later died as a result of the COVID19 vaccine.



Dialogue suggestions:

- *Is there any evidence that her death was a direct result of the vaccine?*
- *Sorry to hear that. Do you have proof that her death was the result of Covid-19 vaccine?*
- *It is always sad news to hear the death of someone, but do we know with absolute certainty that the cause of death is directly connected to the vaccine?*
- *I'm very sorry for your loss but posting unreferenced, unsourced claims that the vaccine causes death will not bring her back nor bring closure to her family. Have they consented to this picture? Have they claimed that it was the vaccine? If not, perhaps we should refrain from using her death in support of your narrative, don't you think?*

Similarly, the leader of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) recently shared a [tweet](#) claiming that a former paramedic from KwaZulu Natal got severely injured by the vaccine.



Dialogue suggestions:

- Yes, there must be transparency but how do we know this was caused by the vaccine?
- I agree with the fact of “open telling” about side effects of the vaccine, more studies perhaps need to be done but do doctors have agreed that this unfortunate incident was directly caused by the vaccine?
- How do you know it was caused by the vaccine?
- Indeed, transparency is important. But we must be careful in fear-mongering and overstating adverse effects so as to discourage people from taking the vaccine. Injuries remain rare and few and far between. What do you think?

A few days later, [images](#) of this injury and the hashtag [#JusticeForZakheleGogo](#) began to receive significant attention online.



This garnered attention to the point where the National Department of Health had to address these concerns. See the [post](#) containing a media statement below:



Dialogue suggestions:

- *Can a doctor please investigate this and determine whether this was a result of the vaccine or not? Can the department look into this and make things clear to the public?*
- *There is a lot of information, videos and photos of people claiming to have adverse reactions to the vaccine. I think more light needs to be brought into this in order to know if those claims are indeed true, or are just fake media trying to promote fear and anger on social media.*
- *I've never heard of cancer being reported as a side-effect of the vaccine. In fact, in order for cancer to be detectable by diagnosis, it must have existed for months. It would be advisable to first investigate this claim properly before jumping to conclusions.*

Side-effects of the vaccine in children

Vaccine hesitancy and skepticism have largely been caused by the potential side-effects that could arise as a result of getting vaccinated. New research has begun to surface adverse effects of the jab and has consequently led to fear and uncertainty - especially as it pertains to children.

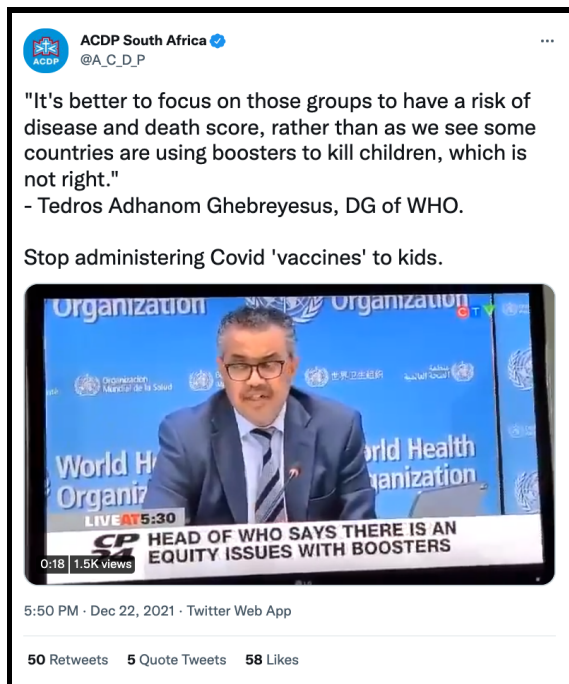
For example in Mid-December, concerning reports of the inflammation of the heart muscle in young children due to the vaccine trended online. This research was done in the US and was picked up by South African audiences. See the [tweet](#) below:



Dialogue suggestions:

- *Alarming news to hear. We need more studies done so that we have a clear view.*
- *More research needs to be done on this for everyone to feel safe!*

Furthermore, South African anti-vaccination political groups such as the ACDP have continued to purport that the vaccine should not be administered to children. See the [tweet](#) below:



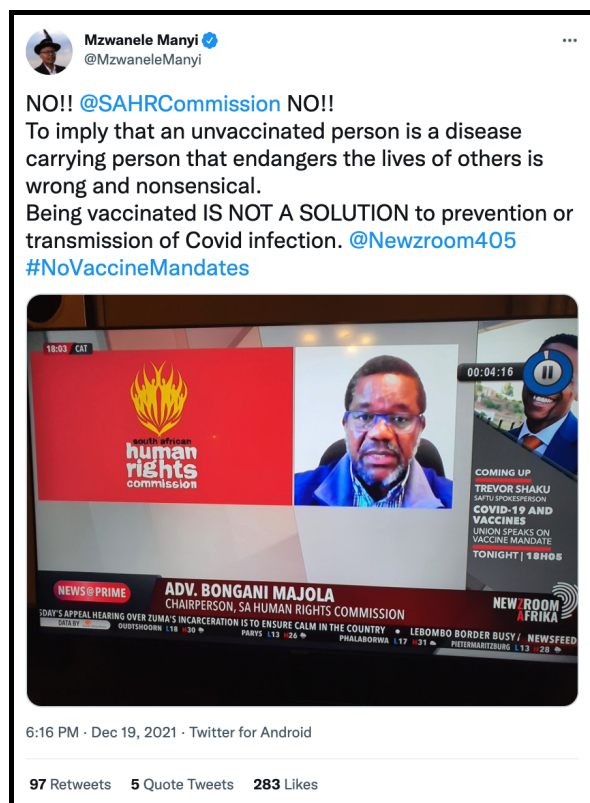
Dialogue suggestions:

- *Why do you say that the boosters are killing children? I haven't heard of any deaths...*
- *Boosters were made to combat new variants that are coming out because of the low global immunity of the global population.*
- *Why do you think boosters kill children?*

Discrimination against the unvaccinated and erosion of public trust

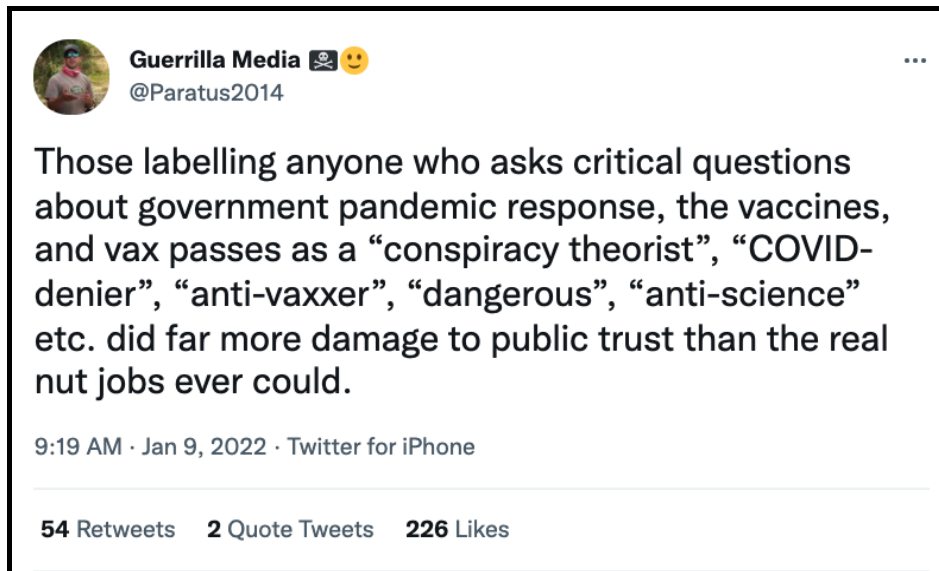
Many have called for the halting of vaccine mandates by citing they infringe on freedom and personal liberty, and that getting jabbed does not necessarily prevent transmission.

For example, the [tweet](#) below which is addressed to the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority says that discrimination against the unvaccinated is wrong:

**Dialogue suggestions:**

- *No one should be discriminated against, but those who are unvaccinated are more likely to spread Covid-19.*
- *Our health workers and systems in general are asking the public to get vaccinated knowing that the current vaccine doesn't stop infection but it helps to release pressure in hospitals by lowering the risk of many to develop a severe illness that will end in hospitalization*
- *How is it wrong if it's true?*

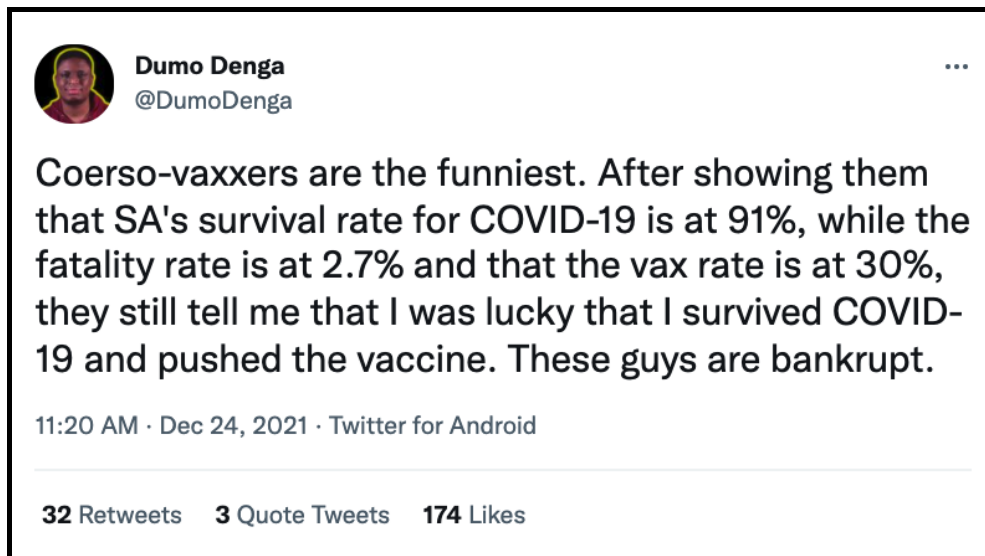
Furthermore, others have blamed name-calling, biased attitudes, and an unwillingness to discuss as the primary cause of the erosion of public trust. See this [tweet](#):



Dialogue suggestions:

- *There is a very clear difference between a person who is logically questioning things, versus a person who is spreading misinformation.*

Similarly, this [tweet](#) attempts to besmirch pro-vaxxers:



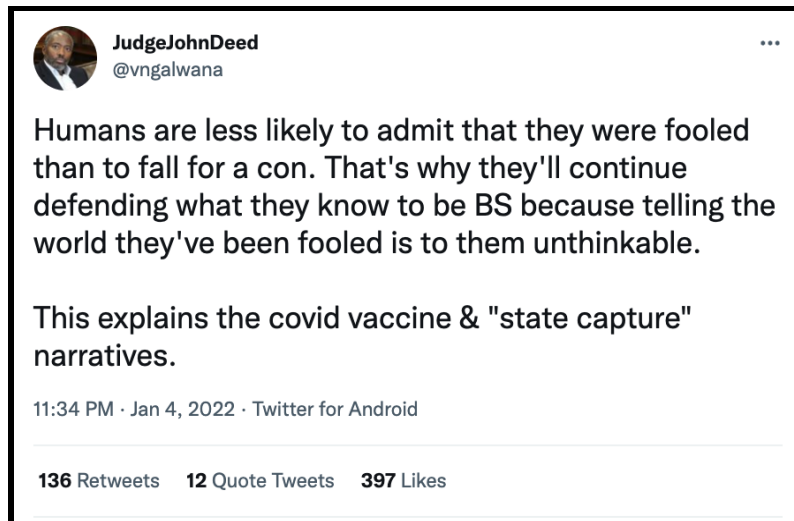
Dialogue suggestions:

- *What do you mean they are bankrupt? Your chances of death from Covid-19 are significantly less if you are vaccinated.*
- *Curious to know where you got these numbers from?*

Those who are vaccinated were fooled

As a result of the recent online rhetoric around vaccine effectiveness, side-effects and injuries, some have begun to raise questions around the logic of decision-makers and the public.

This [tweet](#) speaks to this point:



Dialogue suggestions:

- *I think humans always find a solution in adversity and the vaccine is one of them.*

Furthermore, the inconsistency of information and confusion around vaccine effectiveness has emboldened anti-vaxxers. The first [tweet](#) denounces mandates and the second [tweet](#) attempts to vindicate those who have been labelled as conspiracy theorists.



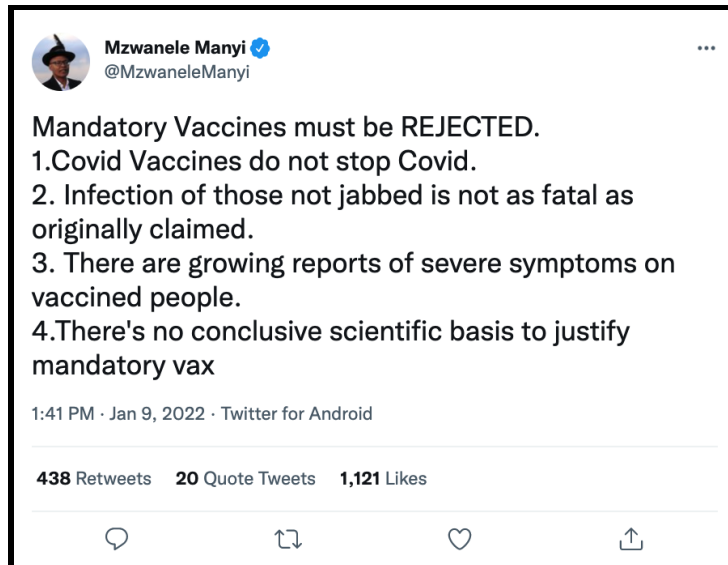
Dialogue suggestions:

- *Where did you get this information from? Are you certain of this information?*

How effective is the vaccine really?

Due to the fact that vaccines cannot guarantee transmission and (re)infection, many continue to question its effectiveness and purpose.

The [tweet](#) below speaks out against vaccine mandates:

**Dialogue suggestions:**

- *I see you made your point, but how do you explain that most people hospitalized right now are unvaccinated ones?*

The [tweet](#) below shares similar sentiments:



The [tweet](#) below speaks against vaccine mandates and promotes “God given natural immunity”:



Dialogue suggestions:

- *The vaccine helps the population to reach global immunity faster and without the risk to losing lots of lives in the process.*

Conflicting information by public figures also contributes to the confusion and mistrust around vaccines. See the [post](#) shared by the ACDP containing an article from the The Guardian:



Misinformation and miseducation about the vaccine

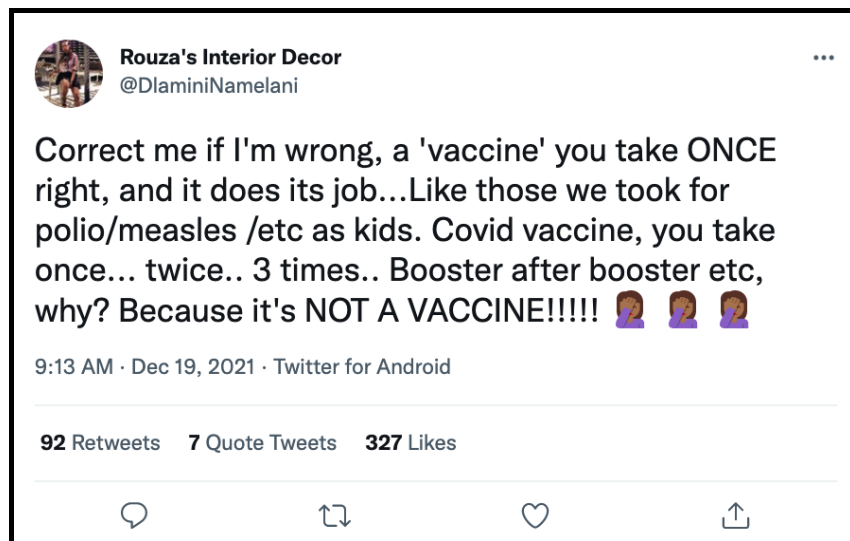
Misinformation about the vaccine remains prevalent. While the vaccine has been prevents severe illness, confusion about this seems to remain as seen in this [tweet](#):



Dialogue suggestions:

- The rush to find a solution and stop the economic crisis may explain some of the mistakes of the vaccine, but still it is helping people.

The idea of booster shots seems to also confuse and deter many as seen in this [post](#):

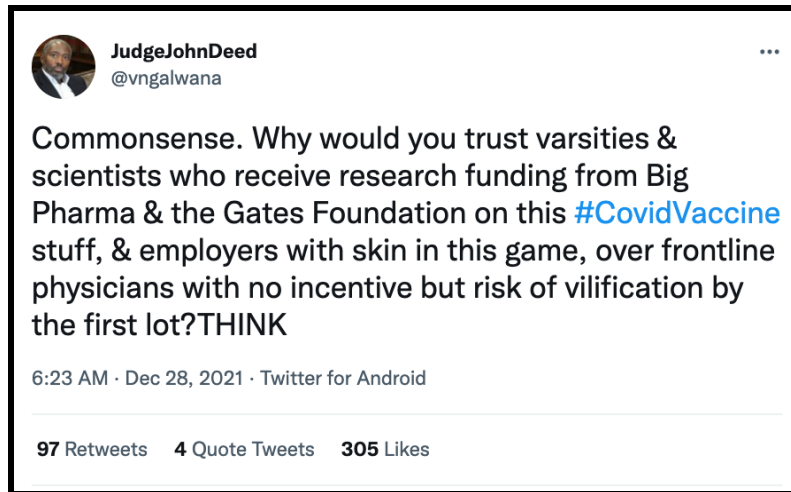


Dialogue suggestions:

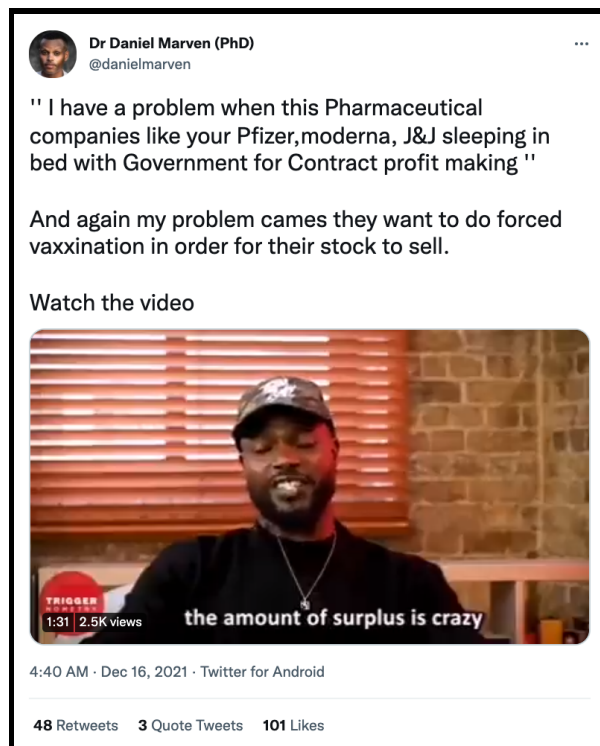
- The vaccine is being improved as time goes on. When the polio vaccine was first introduced you also had to take 2 or 3 shots, but over time the vaccine improved and now only needs one dose. I hope this will happen with the Covid-19 vaccine too.

Vaccines are a money-making scheme

As has been the case since the beginning of the vaccine rollout, many anti-vaxxers and those against mandates have maintained that vaccines are about making profits. The [post](#) below illustrates this point:



Similarly, the [post](#) below does the same:



Dialogue suggestions:

- Do you really think vaccination is about selling?

Alternatives to the vaccine

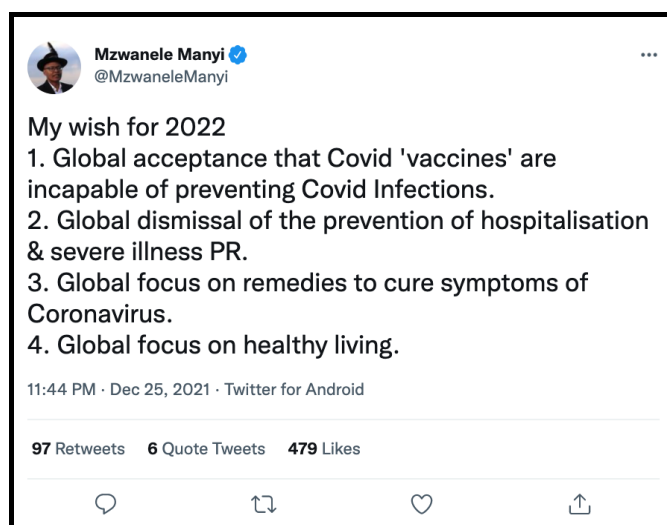
Alternatives to the vaccine such as hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin have been purported by anti-vaxxers and have been at the forefront of the arguments against vaccinations. See the [post](#) below by the ACDP:



Dialogue suggestions:

- Where is your scientific evidence to back up this claim?
- Do you have any proof?

The [tweet](#) below shares the same sentiments:



COVID-19 has been highly exaggerated

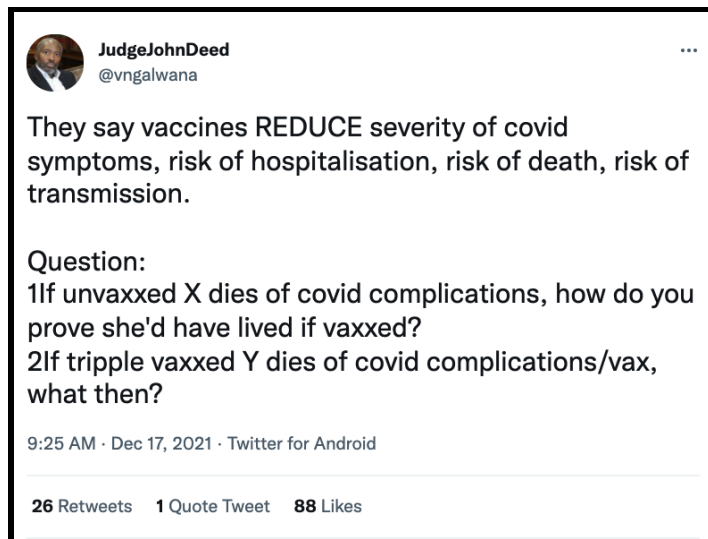
As seen in the [post](#) below, some have begun to believe that COVID-19 is a hoax:



Dialogue suggestions:

- We all need to continue doing our part to end this pandemic!
- A pandemic is not easy to overcome but a solution can be found.

The [tweet](#) below also speaks to this point:



Dialogue suggestions:

- *I've decided to protect myself and get vaccinated as I believe that it gives me better protection than being unvaccinated.*

Travelling during the pandemic

Mandates around travelling during the pandemic have caused a lot of frustration for many. The anecdotal [post](#) below illustrates this point:

**Dialogue suggestions:**

- *Why did they want to take your passport?*
- *Different countries have their own rules, and this is a difficult situation you are in. You should contact your embassy as soon as possible!*