

VACCINE MIS/DISINFORMATION

WEEKLY REPORT

The first section of this week's Vaccine Mis/Disinformation Report includes an analytics review and discusses proposed responses to several key content pieces. The report discusses the top topics of the week.

The second part looks at the social media conversations driven largely by the *vaccine enthusiasts* segment of the Vaccine Trust Spectrum.

4 November Summary:

Part 1

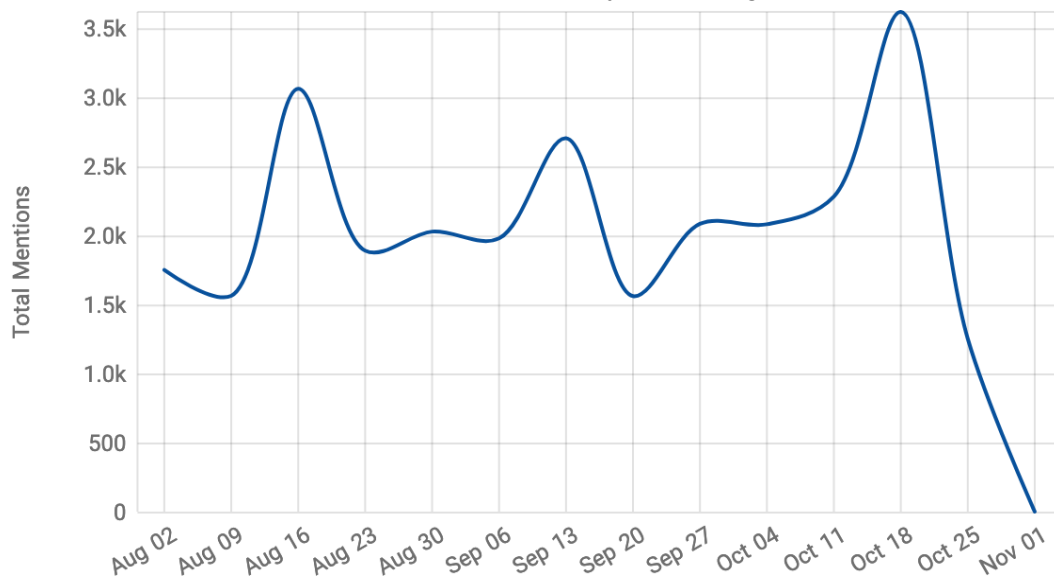
- Top content pieces of the week (with Dialogue Facilitation suggestions)

Part 2

- Normalising vaccine side-effects
- Countering and debunking COVID-19 myths
- Mandatory vaccine jabs for the workplace

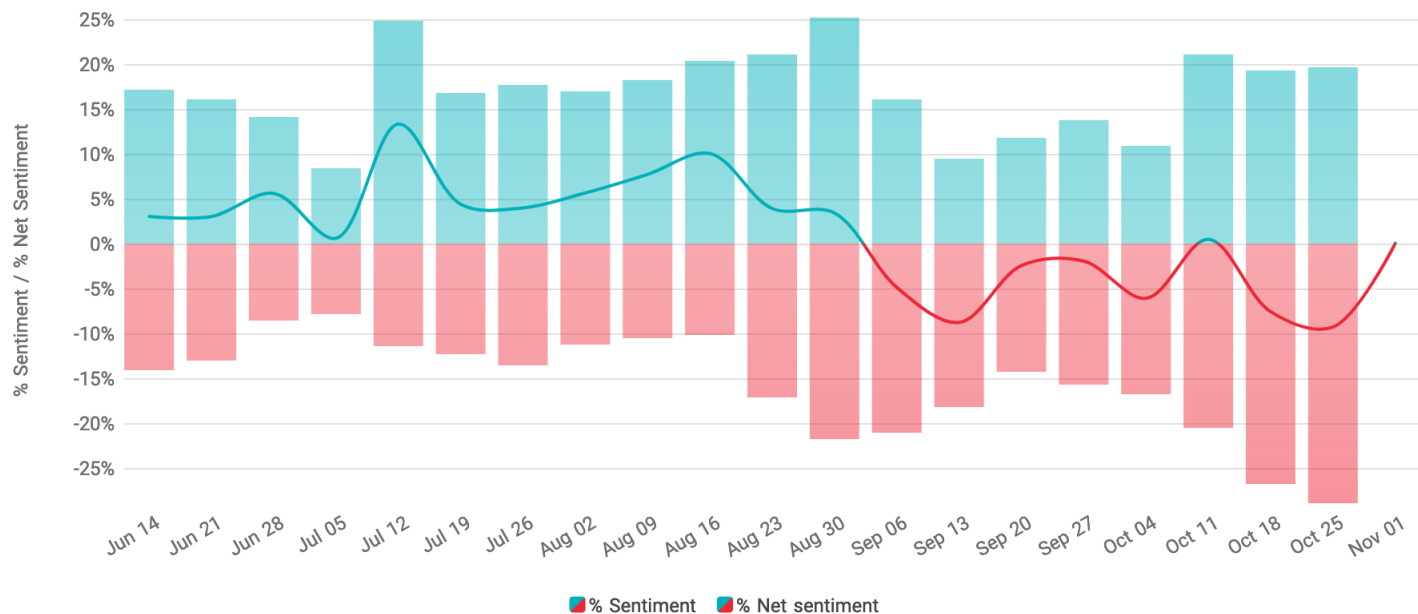
Part 1

The general online COVID-19 conversation this week showed quite a significant decline when compared to previous weeks which held steady. See the graph below:

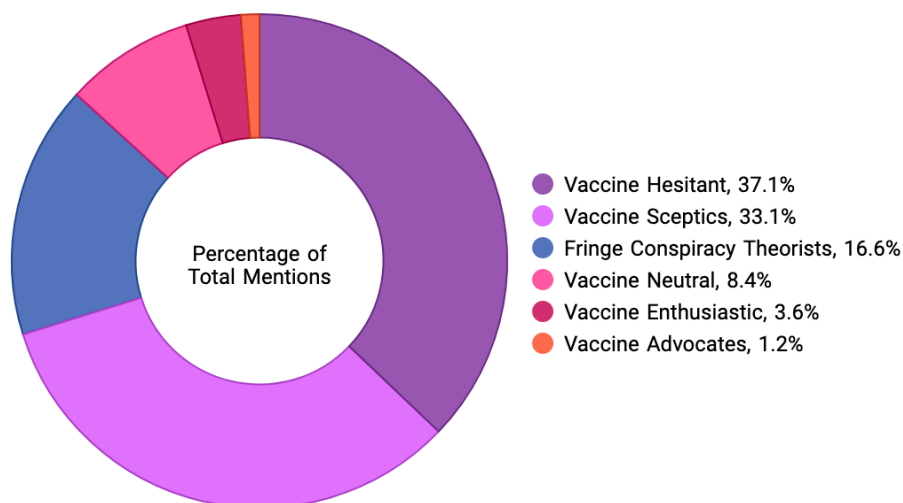


However, even with conversation volume decreasing, our analysts found that the conversation had taken on a different tone driven largely by the local government elections which took place over the last week (see Top Content Pieces of the Week section).

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to take note of the overall net sentiment for public mentions over the last few months. This information is very reliable and accurate because it is crowd verified (see graph below). The blue indicates positive sentiments and the red indicates negative sentiments. This visual indicates that recent rhetoric on vaccines has been largely negative. This is a point of concern that indicates that there remains a significant amount of resistance towards the vaccine:



To illustrate this further, the graph below shows how Vaccine Trust Spectrum by Volume over the same period:



Top content pieces of the week

While this report will focus on the segment of *vaccine enthusiasts*, the top posts of this week reveal a significance of mistrust, criticism, political frustration, and resistance towards the COVID-19 vaccine.

Over the last few weeks, political parties have held campaign rallies across the country ahead of the local election. Our analysts found that this subsequently drew quite a lot of criticism from those who oppose vaccine mandates - essentially accusing government and political movements of hypocrisy. The [tweet](#) below demonstrates this:



Dialogue Facilitation Suggestions:

- *Elections are special moments and happen once or twice in a year. Facing it during covid pandemic is an incredible challenge but I don't think it means that they are not concerned about spreading covid during elections. I think as individuals knowing the danger of the virus we should be cautious in this type of case.*

- Covid regulations should have been adhered to by all, including those in power who were running election campaigns.
- I think it our first time having to go through elections with Covid-19, so I am sure from what usually happens on elections it wasn't easy to adapt with Covid-19 regulations so the vaccine was to play their roles and it within an individual to take good care of themselves
- The dangers of superspreader events are well documented and real. We all have a responsibility to stay safe and take care of one another. As we have seen in countries with high levels of vaccination gatherings become less and less risky

Others made offensive and racially charged tweets that drew parallels between black people and the numerous crises in South Africa, including the virus. The [tweets](#) below illustrate this clearly:



Dialogue Facilitation Suggestions:

- *This kind of tweet can be discriminatory to a generation of black people who actively believe in change. By denying the realness of the virus you disrespect all the lives lost during the pandemic. I think the power of voting is still real and we should all vote for a better future.*
- *Are you speaking for all black people or just you?*
- *A single picture from a country with 1,22 million km² and close to 60 millions residents is not a true reflection of the state of events. Are all or even the majority of votes cast by white people?*

Conversations driven by the government's plans to potentially make the vaccines mandatory for public servants sparked heated debates online. Many questioned the boundaries of body autonomy and liberty. Conversely, others supported this mandate as a matter of public safety. The [tweet](#) below shares an article on the issue:

**The Mercury™** 
@TheMercurySA

...

Government considering making Covid-19 vaccines mandatory for public servants



iol.co.za

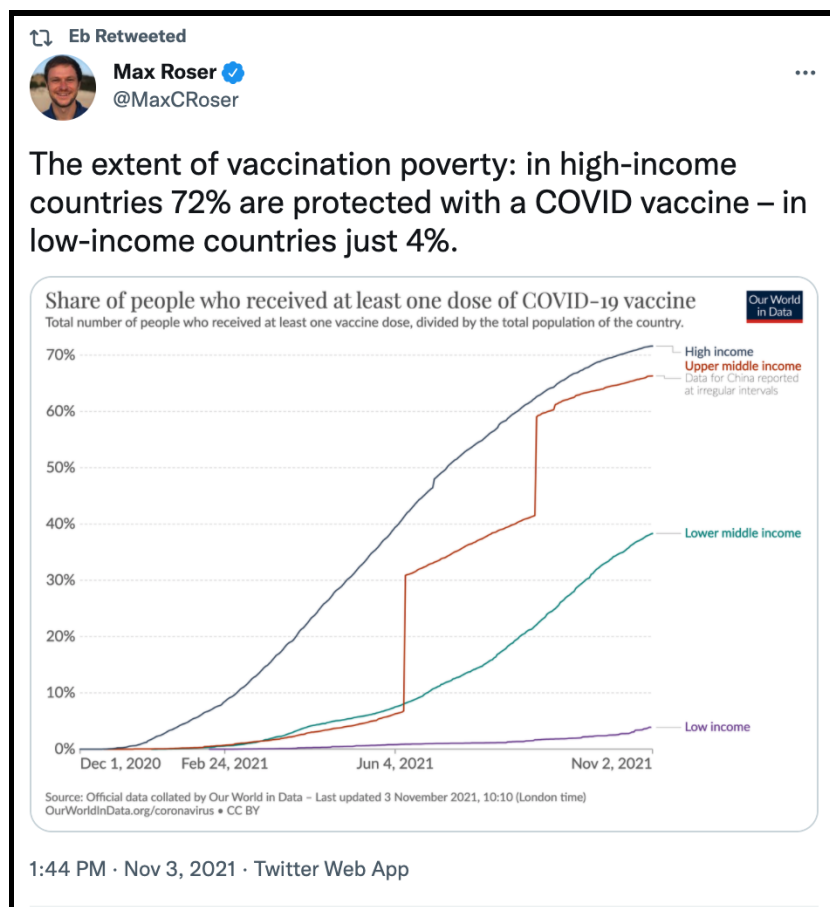
Government considering making Covid-19 vaccines mandatory for public servants...
Department of Public Service and Administration in talks with trade unions
should voluntary vaccination fail to reach acceptable levels

7:34 PM · Oct 28, 2021 · Echobox

Dialogue Facilitation Suggestions:

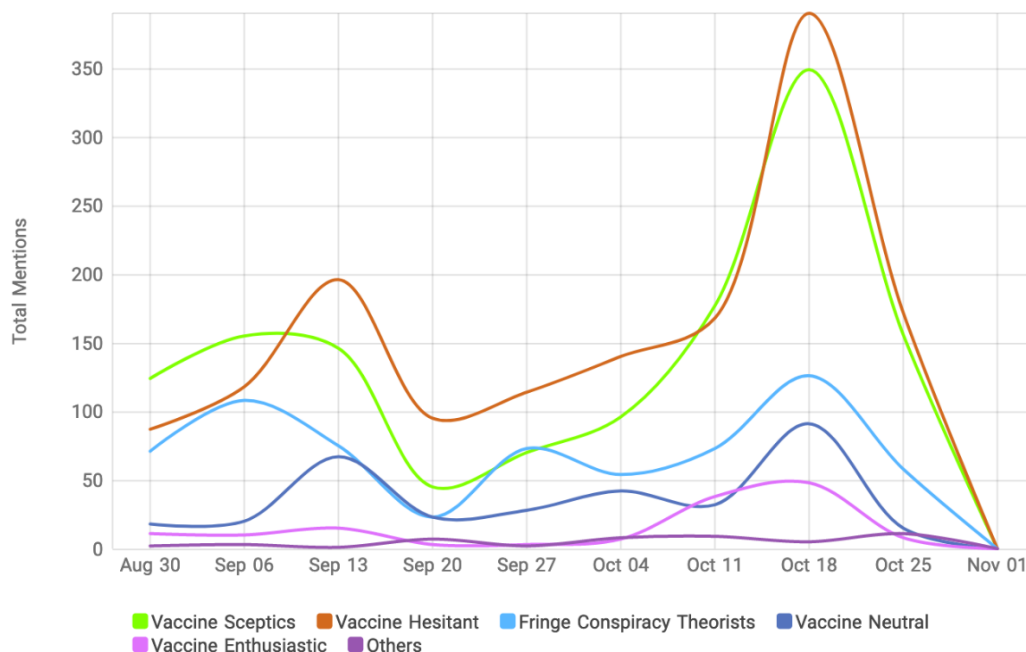
- Measures need to be taken in order to protect the masses, but personal rights of each individual should be considered too.
- The vaccines have gone through a rigorous process of testing and have been shown to be safe. It is important that people are educated on the importance of vaccination for the well being of the citizen

The topic of vaccine poverty and the ethics of pharmaceutical companies making unprecedented profits from the vaccines has caused some to question why this is. The [tweet](#) below shares some statistics on the issue:



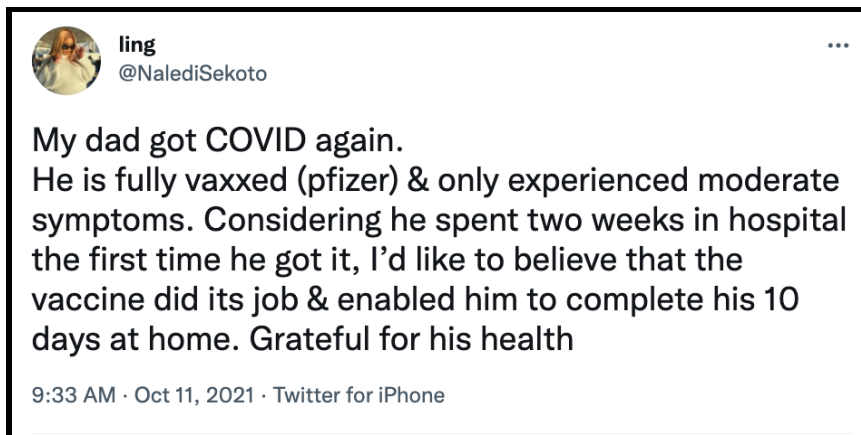
Dialogue Facilitation Suggestions:

- Do you mind sharing where you got this information from?
- Everyone should have the opportunity to be vaccinated if they choose. How can we lessen this divide?
- Interesting stat. Can you provide the source please? How much does the level of education factor into the stats?

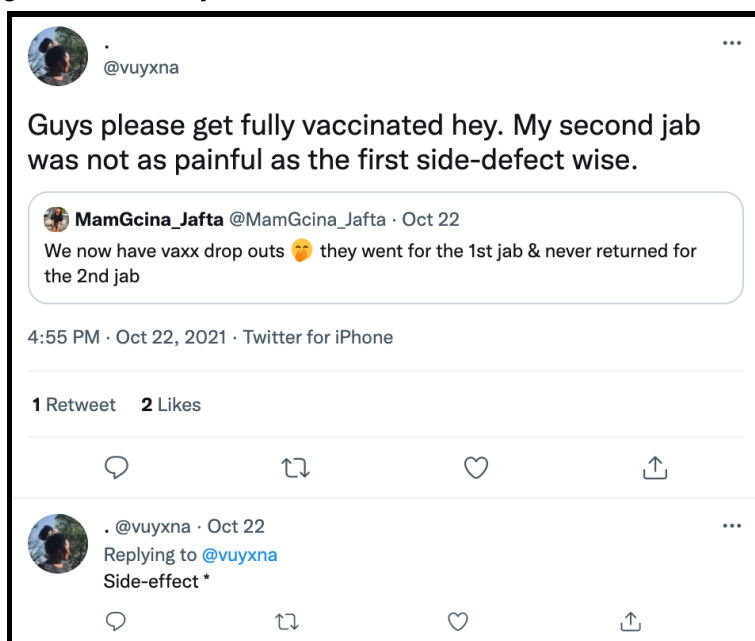


Normalising vaccine side effects

Resistance towards vaccinations largely stems from misinformation and fear around side effects and injuries. In an effort to mitigate this, many vaccine enthusiasts shared anecdotal posts about overcoming the side effects and the benefits of the vaccine. For instance, the [post](#) below shares a story about how the vaccine prevented severe complications in a relative who had contracted the COVID-19:



Furthermore, amidst the rise of *vaccine dropouts* (i.e. those who do not return for their second jab), many vaccine enthusiasts have actively tried to encourage others not to defect. For example, the [tweet](#) below shares an anecdotal sentiment about how easy and painless it is to get the second jab:



Countering and debunking COVID-19 myths

Our analysts found that debunking myths and countering misinformation proved to be a core aspect of vaccine enthusiast rhetoric. Many engaged with posts and/or simply shared resources that promoted verified misinformation. For example, the post below debunks myths and shares a competition that incentivises others to get vaccinated:



Mandatory vaccine jabs for the workplace

Many vaccine enthusiasts actively supported the notion of mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for the workplace and beyond. For instance, news outlet @TimeLIVE [tweeted](#) an article titled “Rhodes University set to enforce mandatory Covid-19 vaccination”. While some criticised this move, other advocated for this mandatory vaccines as seen in the [post](#) below:

**RUAN JOOSTE**

@DURITZ79

Everyone, and I mean every single institution or local organisation should implement such a rule. So if anti-vaxxers want to play with their own lives, they can do so on their own damn time and dime. [#safetyfirst](#)

**Times LIVE**  @TimesLIVE · Oct 21

Rhodes University's council this week approved a mandatory Covid-19 vaccination rule for the resumption of face-to-face university activities next year. timeslive.co.za/news/south-afr...

8:28 PM · Oct 21, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone