

VACCINE MIS/DISINFORMATION

WEEKLY REPORT

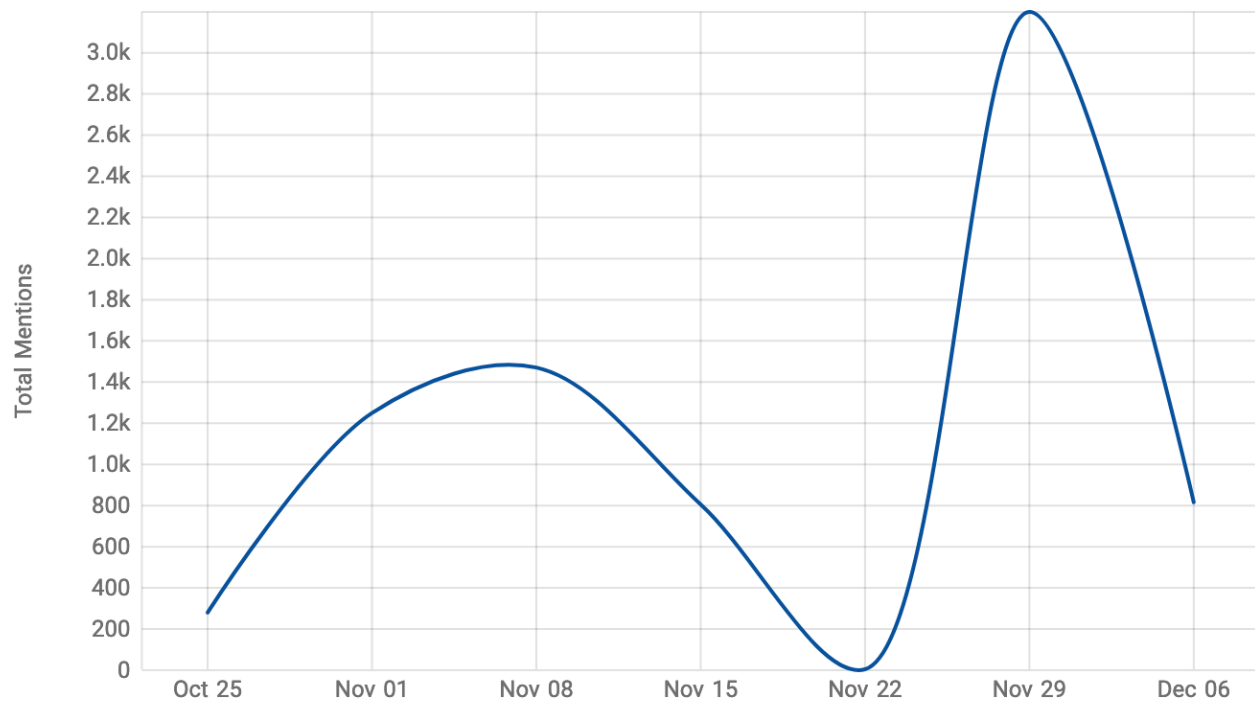
This week's Vaccine Mis/Disinformation report focuses on the social media conversations driven by the new Omicron variant, resistance against vaccine mandates, fear and misinformation.

09 December Summary:

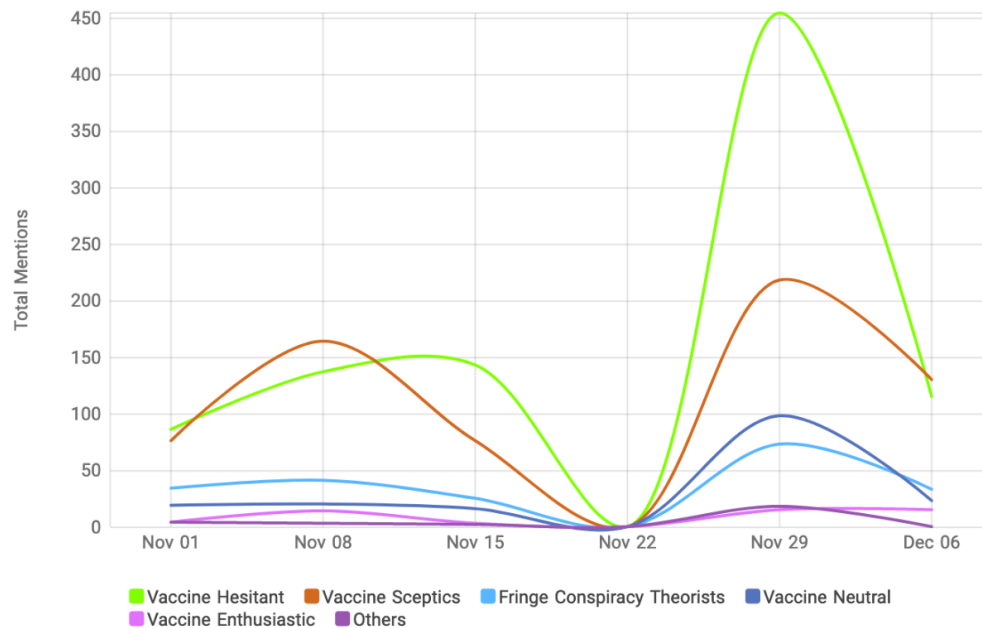
- **Extent of vaccine's protection against COVID-19**
- **Vaccine hesitancy and skepticism**
- **Omicron variant and discrimination against Africa**
- **Mandatory vaccinations**
- **Alleged government manipulation, alternative treatment and conspiracy fringe theories**

Part 1

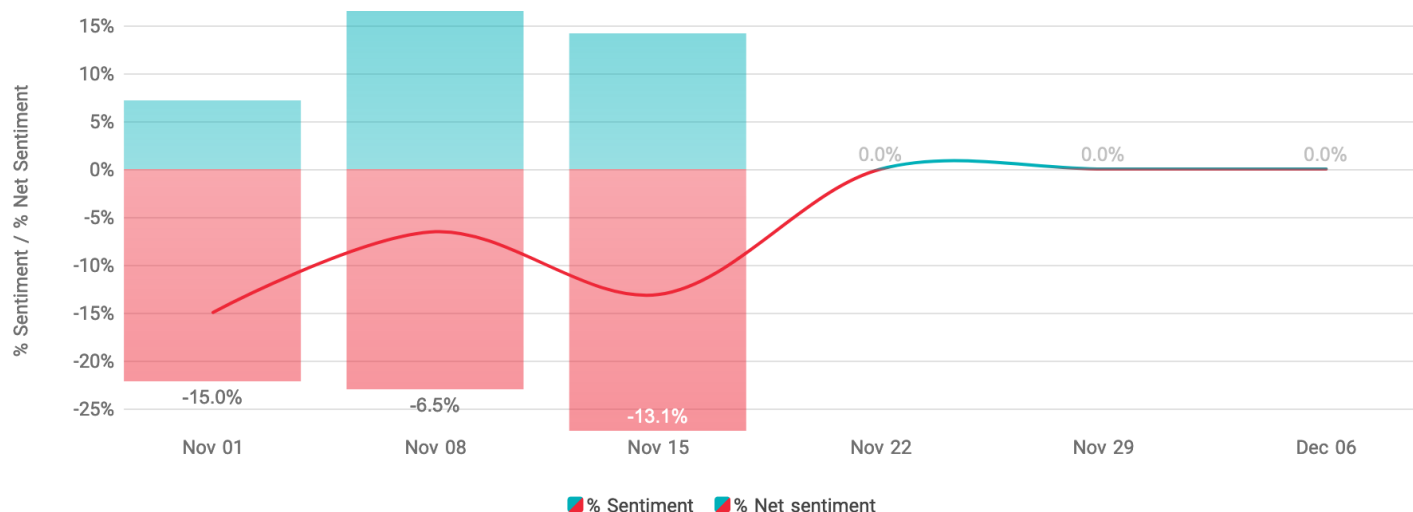
The Twitter conversation surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine has seen fluctuations in volume. There was an uptick in volume following the announcement of the Omicron variant in the third week of November. From conversations over the last week, our analysts project that the discourse surrounding the vaccine will like remain stable throughout December. See the graph below:

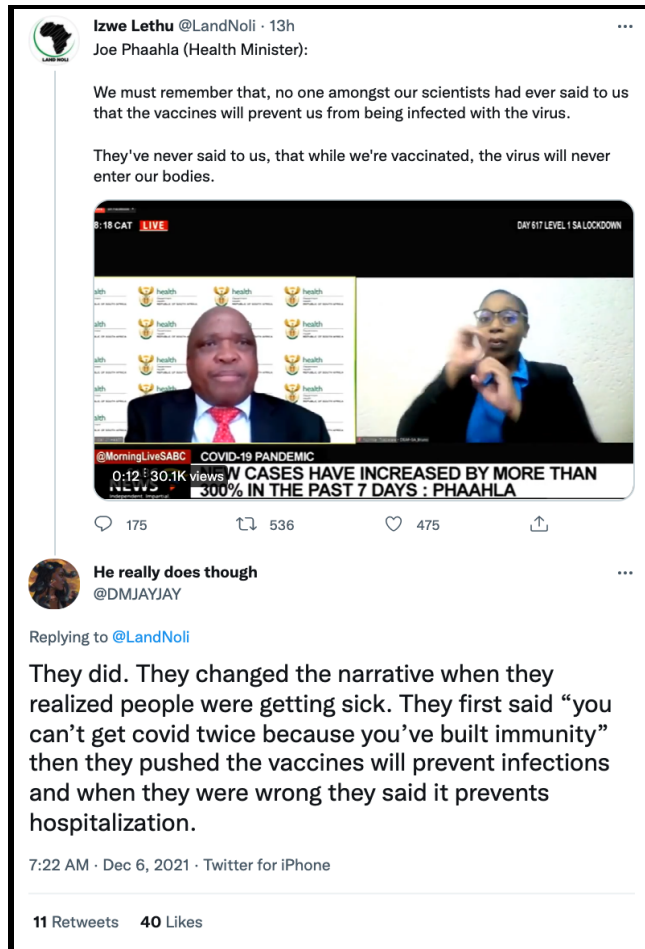


Over the last month, the overall volume has seen some small fluctuations but has remained steady. Vaccine skepticism and vaccine hesitancy have been the most prominent. This has been exacerbated by the Omicron variant, vaccine mandates, fear and confusion. See the graph below:



Furthermore, it is important to note the general sentiment of the public. The graph below shows the overall net sentiment of mentions over November into December. This information is reliable and accurate because it is crowd verified. The blue indicates positive sentiments and the red indicates negative sentiments. Most of November largely stayed in the negative zone. There was small bump into the positive, but that seems to have come down again as the rhetoric over the last week shows an equal level of both negative and positive sentiments:





Dialogue Suggestions:

- *Where and when did they say it?*
- *We still need to remember that immunity is not permanent, it is for a certain time especially when we have new variants coming out. If it was the case, diseases like flu would be non-existent by now.*
- *Regardless of if there was a change of narrative, I think the transparency is updating Covid-19 and vaccine facts are invaluable. Reduction of hospitalisation is a major plus, not only for the person but also for our health infrastructure and country. What do you think?*
- *The ever changing virus needs scientists to keep up with the information. As it changes the information changes. Since it is a new virus I believe that the narrative is changing because they are actually doing what they are supposed to be doing. What do you think?*

Similarly, many remain confused about how the vaccine works as seen in the [tweet](#) below which questions the concept of herd immunity, why people still get infected despite being jabbed, and why the virus still continues to spread:

**Dialogue Suggestions:**

- *By reaching immunity against the covid we would reduce the chance to have new variants coming out, and the vaccine is the safest way to do that without losing lots of lives in the process.*
- *The vaccine helps the Vaccinated to be able to fight the illness of Covid-19*
- *Her(d) immunity can only be viable if we have large vaccine uptake - something which has not happened yet. I don't think it is us being lied to, but rather that we did not hold up our end of the bargain... If vaccine numbers increase, infections will decrease. Why do you feel lied to?*
- *Herd immunity comes when a large number of the population is vaccinated. Yes it is still transmittable but the number of Covid related deaths has decreased. I don't know why you feel lied to?*

Again, the fact that the vaccine cannot guarantee absolute immunity against COVID-19 seems to have created a lot of frustration. This has led to many questioning the motives of powerful institutions and the governments which enforce vaccine mandates. The [tweet](#) below illustrates this issue:

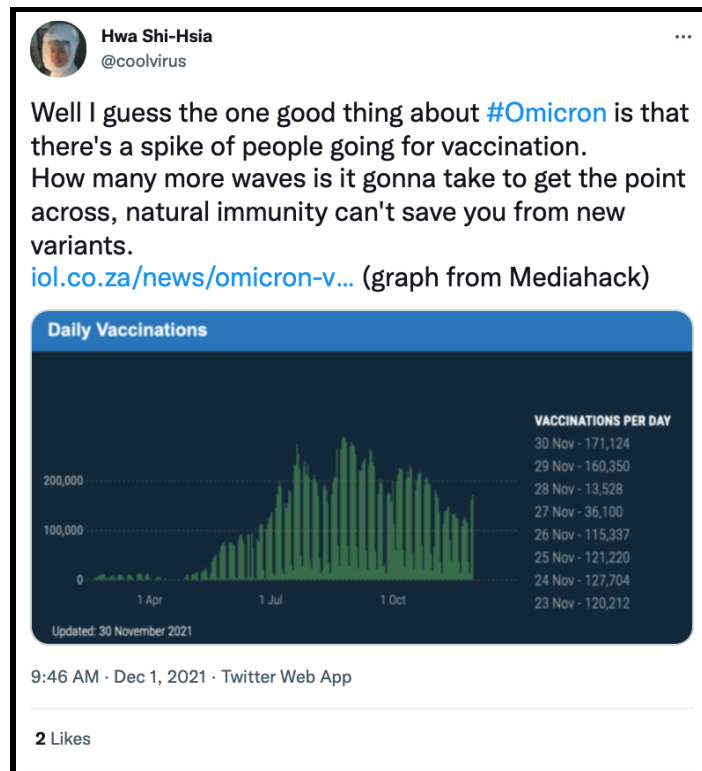


Dialogue Suggestions:

- *Reduce to marionettes by who?*
- *Who do you think the government is dancing for? In my eyes they have only acted on the data provided by our scientists and made recommendations accordingly.*
- *I think the governments of the world are doing the best they can with the information available. I think there is still a lot to be learnt about this virus and the option of a vaccine is one that many are grateful for. I don't think the governments are dancing for anyone. Maybe just scrambling like crazy trying to save the human race. What's your take on that?*

Vaccine hesitancy and skepticism

Undoubtedly, the Omicron variant has increased vaccine hesitancy and skepticism. However, an interesting turn of events, this very problem has caused an uptick in the rate of those going for vaccinations. The two issues have become conflated as can be seen in the [tweet](#) below:

**Dialogue Suggestions:**

- *You have a point...*
- *It's sad that new variants of Covid drive vaccine uptake, regardless I am happy that more and more people are getting vaccinated. Might also have something to do with increased vaccine education, or what do you think?*

- *Maybe the development of this new variant will make people realize that actually what was being said all this time about getting vaccinated to stop the mutation of the virus was true. Trust that now we can get past vaccine hesitancy and have Omicron be the last new variant.*

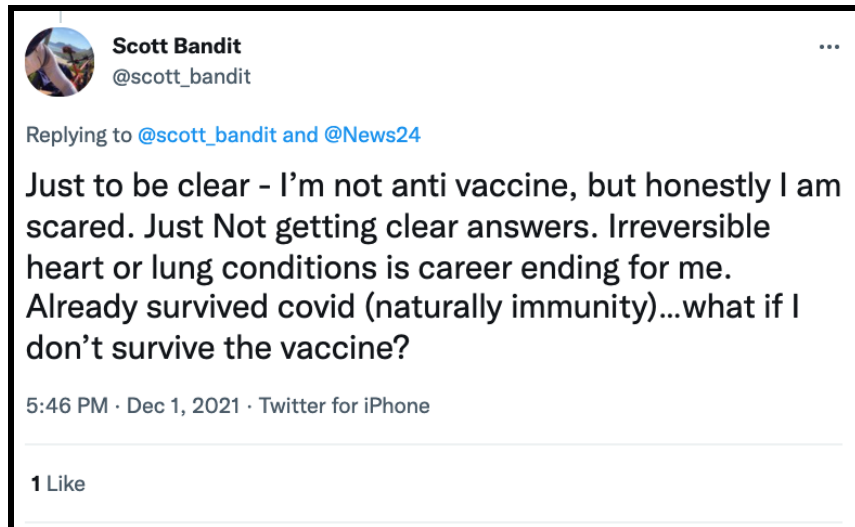
Conversely, the Omicron variant has caused a surge in misinformation and mistrust. It has caused a reemergence of rhetorics suggesting that the vaccine is ineffective, unproven, unsafe and needs more research. See the exchange in the [post](#) below:



Dialogue Suggestions:

- *A bit confused on what you are trying to prove here*
- *Where did you see that the vaccinated young ones are hospitalized?*
- *These later images seem unrelated to the conversation... I don't think making claims like it is not a vaccine, it is untested - cause it's just not true.*
- *I do not see how these images are related to the hospitalization of young ones or the vaccine. There is no clear explanation of what is going on. I would like more information than a screenshot of something under a microscope. This could literally be anything.*

Furthermore, fears about side-effects and vaccine injuries (especially from those who have comorbidities) remain a concern. This anecdotal [tweet](#) provides a good example of that:



Dialogue Suggestions:

- *There are great, sure places where you can have clear answers on the risk of the vaccine and the benefits, I am talking about government websites. I will just advise you to not trust what you read on social media about the effects of the vaccine because those don't sometimes come from scientific proof but more about people's feelings.*
- *I think it is normal for people to have fear, especially if it could affect your personal health and career. What drove me to vaccinate is the fact that we have clearer answers on the vaccine than we do on the effects of long covid. Remember natural immunity does not guarantee that the virus will not mutate and come back in a more dangerous way - especially because it's a virus that affects your respiratory symptoms.*
- *I think the best thing to do is get clear and factual answers from perhaps a medical practitioner you trust. There are plenty of online sources. Do the research and you will find the information you are looking for. "My brothers, friend's cousin" stories are not research.*

Omicron variant and discrimination against Africa

South African scientists and doctors sounded the alarm on the Omicron variant to alert the world of this mutation. Consequently, several African countries have since been subjected to travel ban discrimination and have been the target of aphrophobia, racism and xenophobia. The [post](#) below shows a disturbing snippet from a Spanish newspaper:



Dialogue Suggestions:

- We should always stand up against racism
- How do you think we can end discrimination against Africa, especially in times like this pandemic?
- Discrimination against anyone is not acceptable. I think firstly South Africans should look to see how we treat others in our country and then try to be the best example. Yes our leaders should speak up but I don't think we are as innocent as we would like to believe...

Mandatory vaccinations

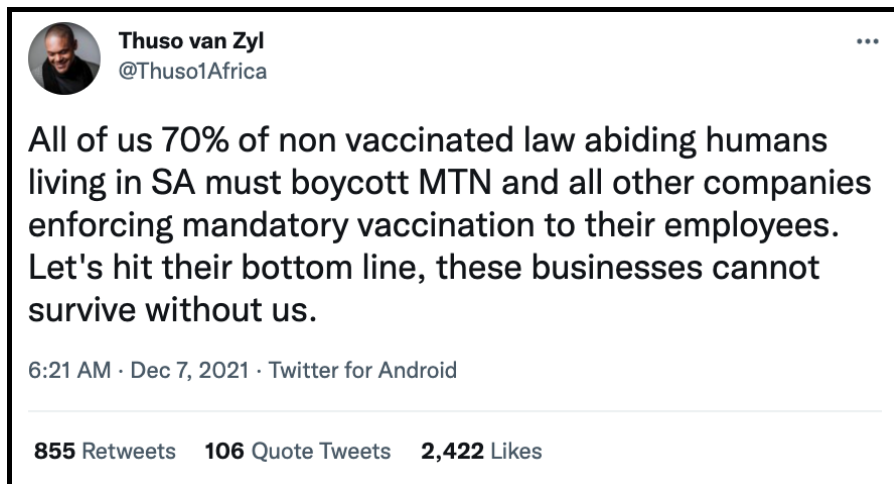
In an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19, government bodies have made recommendations to mandate vaccinations in workplaces and other public areas. See the [tweet](#) below of a recent government announcement to this effect:



Dialogue Suggestions:

- *More companies are implementing this measure for the good of all*
- *Companies are entitled to protect their employees, and I think this is an effective way of doing so - what do you think?*
- *More companies are exercising their right to implement this. I think this is mainly an inconvenience for the unvaccinated. If you have valid reasons for not wanting the vaccine then it should be your responsibility to provide negative Covid tests regularly. I don't know, what do you feel is the best way to compromise?*

Mandatory vaccinations have been met with a lot of resistance. Many who are of this view cite an infringement on freedom, liberty and body autonomy. Some have begun calling for the boycott of companies that make vaccine compulsory for employees as seen in the [tweet](#) below:

**Dialogue Suggestions:**

- *I think companies should have the right to place measures to protect employees and also employees should have the right to go to court if they feel discriminated against by such measures*
- *I don't think calling to hurt businesses who have their employees' best interest at heart is right... Why do you think it is the right thing to do?*
- *I think the companies are only doing what is well within their rights. I think their bottom line is protecting their employees and the countries in which they operate. Do you think it's fair to persecute these companies, like South Africa has been for discovering Omicron?*

Echoing this sentiment, others have conflated vaccine mandates with the government being in cahoots with institutions and organisations such as pharmaceutical companies, inter-governmental organisations and more. This rhetoric is concerning because it also gives rise to conspiracy theories. The [tweet](#) below demonstrates this:



Dialogue Suggestions:

- What do you mean by “took” from Bill Gates etc?
- What did he take from them?
- Why don't you think it will work in SA?

Alleged government manipulation, alternative treatment, and fringe conspiracy theories

Many have accused the government of manipulating the public in order to exert control. These conspiracy theories often go hand-in-hand with vaccine critics who often bring up alternative treatments such as ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. The [post](#) below is a video of a religious leader spreading this information:



Dialogue Suggestions:

- *I believe the information is repetitive because that's what works? Like with STDs and STIs, the message was the same and repeated over and over again. Use protection. I think they do this so it can sink in quicker and faster because of the severity of the virus. Why do you think they keep repeating it? I don't think it's to control anyone.*