



**SOCIAL MEDIA INSIGHTS INTO
HOW ONLINE *MISINFORMATION*
AND *DISINFORMATION* ARE BEING
SPREAD ACROSS SOCIAL
PLATFORMS IN AUSTRALIA**

MAY 2021

CONTENT

Background	3
Executive Summary	4
Methodology And Dataset	5
Key stages of the research process	5
Research approach	5
Examples of keywords	6
Filtering conversations for misinformation	7
Misinformation/ Disinformation Narratives	9
What are misinformation and disinformation?	9
Three core narratives in Australia	9
Anti-lockdown And Qanon	11
Key themes and issues identified	13
Narratives are highly influenced by global actors	13
Alternative social networks have become a safe harbour for conspiratorial communities	16
Outrage drives engagement but other techniques build community	20
Anti-vaccine	23
Key themes and issues identified	24
The path to misinformation starts innocuously in unmoderated comment threads	25
Local influencers fuel and amplify narratives	26
Anti-5g	27
Key themes and issues identified	29
Proliferation of local Australians for Safe Technology Facebook groups	29
Impact of mainstream media	30
Narratives are weaponized with mix of authoritative mainstream news and alternative news	31
Same people, different narratives	37
Appendix	40
Keywords list	40
Lists of most popular conspiracy driven accounts, by total interactions	41
Facebook page links and assigned categories	48

BACKGROUND

This research was conducted by We Are Social, the world's largest social specialist agency network, with offices in 13 countries, including Australia. We were appointed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) following a tender on the Australian Government's Digital Marketplace.

We Are Social has extensive knowledge of social listening, trends identification and culture tracking. The agency has been providing research services for over 10 years and has experience working with Australian Government agencies including conducting a social media audit into violent extremism online in Australia for the Attorney General's office.

The purpose of the research was to examine the volume and spread of false and harmful narratives on social media in Australia and provide insights into how these narratives are amplified.

This research was conducted to inform a report to the government on the voluntary Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation. This report is to include an examination into the current state of mis- and disinformation in Australia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report uses real-world examples to demonstrate how false and harmful narratives are being spread via a range of social media platforms in Australia. The report discusses the origins, amplification and impacts of three COVID-19 related misinformation narratives: anti-lockdown (including QAnon), anti-vaccine and anti-5G.

Key themes and issues identified

Narratives are highly influenced by global actors

Transnational influencers are the source and strength of misinformation narratives. People who share misinformation on social media feel part of, and are influenced by, global movements including QAnon, pro-Trump, health freedoms and safe technology.

Alternative social networks have become a safe harbour for conspiratorial communities

The increased scrutiny and pressure to remove misinformation by mainstream social platforms has caused conspiratorial communities to migrate to unmoderated, more private social networks including Telegram, Parler, MeWe and Gab.

Outrage drives engagement but other techniques build community

The idea of belonging to a group, sharing secret knowledge or solving a deeper mystery strengthens the sense of community. Users see themselves as 'free thinkers' or 'truth seekers', who avoid mainstream news and rely on their communities for alternative news.

The path to misinformation starts innocuously in unmoderated comment threads

Comment sections are often moderated by page authors rather than social platforms, leaving space for misinformed conversations. Innocuous comments and dialogue can begin with general anti-institution sentiment, and lead to misinformed ideas supported by false news and misleading information, including links to conspiratorial websites and videos.

Local influencers fuel and amplify narratives

Conspiratorial communities revere and cheer on local influencers for taking a stand against institutions, for supporting their beliefs and offering a safe space for misinformation. There are a small number of Australians with a disproportionate influence over misinformation narratives, including elected officials, celebrities, and social media influencers.

Narratives are weaponized with a mix of reframed authoritative mainstream news and alternative news sources

Communities use authoritative mainstream news sources to reframe the news of the day to suit their narratives. Alternative news is usually sourced from global websites and often espouses false and misleading content.

Same people, different narratives

Followers of any one misinformation group have a tendency to believe in and align with multiple populist misinformation narratives. COVID-19 conspiracies have united disparate groups of people with very different primary concerns. At one end, the narratives attract the anti-authoritarian who sees issues such as vaccines and 5G as part of an assault by big government on the freedom of individuals. At the other, they appeal to the holistic health community, who are often allied with those distrustful of Big pharma. This results in individuals often using multiple hashtags and themes in the same post including 5G, anti-vaccine, anti-lockdown and QAnon.

METHODOLOGY AND DATASET

The research was conducted by We Are Social, the world's largest specialist social agency. We Are Social has extensive knowledge of social listening, trends identification and cultural tracking. The agency has been providing research services for 10 years and has extensive experience working with Australian Government agencies including conducting a social media audit into violent extremism in Australia for the Attorney-General of Australia.

The research was conducted between the 11th of April 2021 and the 12th of May 2021. The research analysed a sample of Australian open-social conversations between April 2020 and March 2021, and analysed a sample of Australian conspiracy-driven communities between May 2020 and April 2021. The project used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Key stages of the research process

1. Preliminary audit to identify key misinformation narratives for analysis
2. Identification of misinformation keywords and accounts using social media monitoring tools
3. Creation of lists and keyword queries for each narrative
4. Data collection of conversations for analysis
5. Filtration of conversations accounts to remove content and accounts that do not meet criteria
6. Conversation immersion and insight extraction into report

Research approach

A preliminary audit was undertaken to identify three misinformation narratives for analysis. Narratives were selected based on the perceived threat to the Australia public, the volume of conversation and the recency or topicality of the narrative. The three initial narratives selected, in consultation with the ACMA, included anti-vaccine, anti-5G, and anti-lockdown. The QAnon conspiracy was later identified as a relevant additional area of examination, and due to overlapping areas of examination, was coupled with the anti-lockdown narrative.

To identify the scale and drivers of the key narratives, an analysis of conversations was initially conducted using a range of social media monitoring tools. Data sources included Crowdtangle (for Facebook and Instagram), Buzzsumo (YouTube) and Brandwatch (for Twitter, Reddit and forums). For platforms that cannot be accessed via monitoring tools, including Telegram and TikTok, a manual analysis was used, drawing on platform mentions on other platforms (e.g. TikTok content posted on Facebook).

A requirement for this project was that the misinformation needed to be Australian. Content was classified as Australian using tool geographical filters, where available. For platforms where geo-filters are not available (Instagram and Facebook groups), accounts were selected using keyword searches of misinformation terms and the word 'Australia'. Accounts mentioning both the relevant keywords and Australia were then manually reviewed and selected based on visual cues and references relevant to Australia.

To prepare the analysis, conversations were extracted using a combination of keyword queries and manual analysis to ensure conversations met the criteria. Content from all platforms was then standardised into a single database for volume analysis. Analysts then qualitatively analysed the conversations to identify key themes and case studies. Case study candidates were selected using a specific hashtag or trending phrase (e.g. #vaxxtruth), posts from a particular group or community associated with misinformation or disinformation (e.g. Australians For Safe Technology), or a highly viral piece of content appearing to contain misinformation or disinformation.

The names of people on posts and comments have been anonymised to protect their privacy, excluding public figures, including social media influencers with a large number of followers. Deleted posts were accessible via social media monitoring tools, excluding deleted YouTube videos.

Examples of keywords

The below table provides examples of the types of misinformation keywords used to identify conversations for analysis. A full list of keywords is provided at [Appendix A](#).

ANTI-VACCINE	5G	ANTI-LOCKDOWN AND QANON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Variations of vaccines misspelling (e.g. v@cc!, v8ccine, vacks, vackseen) - Vaccine agenda or anti-vaccine related (e.g. nomandatoryvaccines, novaccine, novax, rejectthevaccines, vaxxtruth) - Vaccine AND keywords associated with misinformation (e.g. bombshell, uncensored, exposed, criminal, kills, mental illness, sheeple, medical coup) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - anti-5G related (e.g. stop5G, anti5G, No5G, 5ghealtheffects, 5gisnotsafe, 5gkills, idonotconsentto5g) - 5G keywords associated with anti-5G protests (e.g. 5g protest, 5gglobalprotestday) - 5G AND keywords associated with misinformation (e.g. radiation, unsafe, kills, cancer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Variations of anti-institutional response to COVID-19 (e.g. scandemic, plandemic, conjob19, conspiracyrealist, coronaisnotreal) - Anti-lockdown related (e.g. lockdownkills, stopthelockdown, losethemask, masksdontwork) - QAnon related (e.g. qanon, aussieq, qaustralia, #q, qdrops, qanonarmy, qanonaustralia, qarmy, wwq1wga, thegreatreset)

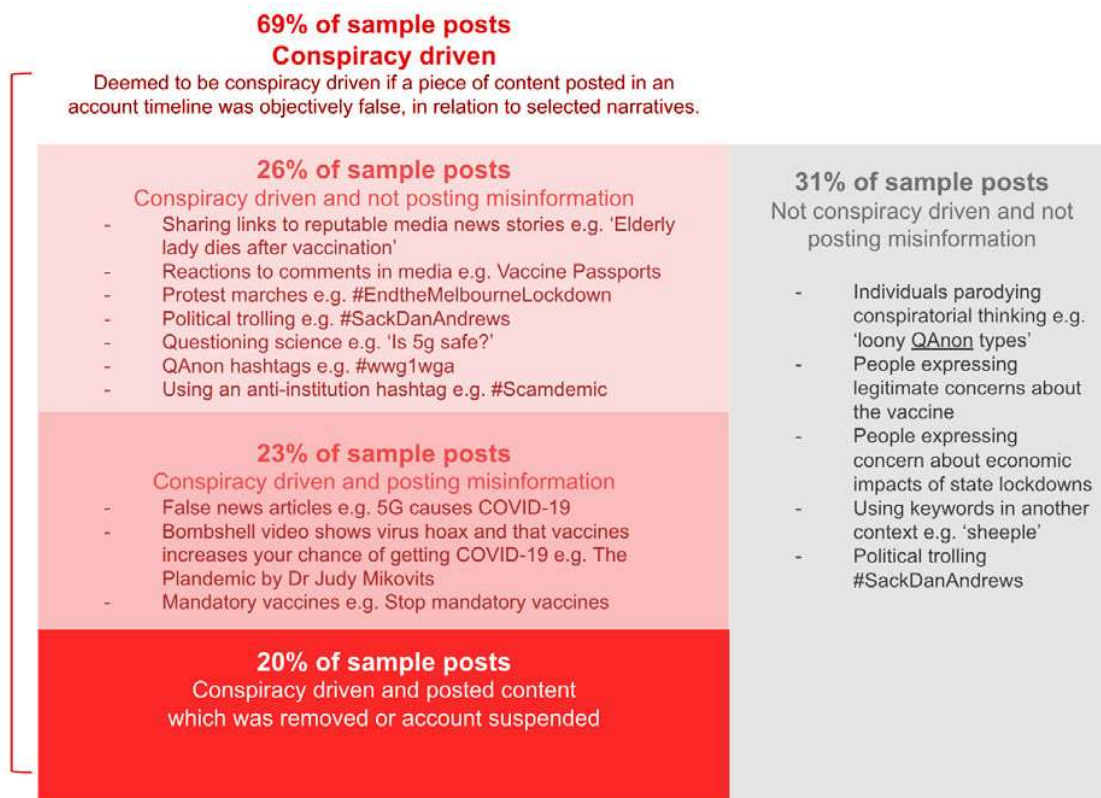
Filtering conversations for misinformation

Conversations were filtered, as much as possible, to limit conversations to those containing misinformation or that were part of broader conspiratorial communities spreading misinformation narratives. After a manual review of the sample, specific keywords, groups and accounts were removed, such as in cases of seemingly genuine debate or political discussion, off-topic conversations, benign content mentioning keywords, or general trolling of political leaders. Reputable news sources were also removed as these were unlikely to be a source of misinformation and had a high volume of general mentions.

A survey of 200 random posts was undertaken to understand how much objectively false content was in the sample. Based on We Are Social analysis, the survey identified that 69% of the posts in the sample were authored by conspiracy-driven individuals or groups. Broken down, 23% of sample posts were deemed to explicitly contain misinformation, 26% were deemed to be from conspiracy-driven groups or individuals sharing content designed to support misinformation narratives, and 20% were deemed to be misinformation due to action taken by platforms to remove the posts or suspend the accounts.

The survey identified that 31% of the sample posts did not appear to be actively spreading misinformation or participating in conspiracy-driven groups. This includes examples of parody, trolling, use of certain keywords in other contexts, or engaging in debate on or expressing concerns about issues without actively spreading false or misleading information. This result highlights some of the difficulties of conducting social media research in this space.




As a consequence, quantitative results should be interpreted as directionally accurate with regards to trends, but less accurate in terms of total volume, given the sample includes a portion of non-conspiracy-driven content.



Community sample

To identify conspiracy-driven community-level insights on platforms where there was no geographical filter, a list of 100 Facebook groups, 100 Facebook pages and 91 Instagram profiles were identified as accounts that have posted objectively false content in the last 12 months. Accounts were identified using the same keyword searches listed above. The full list is provided at [Appendix B](#).

FACEBOOK GROUPS	FACEBOOK PAGES	INSTAGRAM PROFILE
Facebook groups are communities of shared interest. Unlike Facebook pages, group members can post content on a wall and interact through	Pages are places on Facebook where public figures, organisations and nonprofits can	A profile is a place on Instagram where users can share information, such as their interests, photos, and videos.

<p>discussion threads.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Wake Up Australia <hr/>  The Defenders Of Conservatism <hr/>  Australian Climate Sceptics Group <hr/>  Australians for Safe Technology 	<p>connect with their fans or customers.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Australian National Review <hr/>  Respect Australia Rally - Gold Coast <hr/>  Australians against radical Religions and corrupt politicians <hr/>  She ain't right 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  australiansvsstheagenda <hr/>  thenewearth <hr/>  unitylinkofficial <hr/>  reignitedemocracyaustralia
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Omissions

All data analysed in this research is from public conversations on social media platforms, sourced using social media monitoring tools and open-source intelligence techniques.

Content from private accounts, closed Facebook groups, messenger platforms (e.g. Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp) and smaller, alternative social networks (e.g. Parler, Gab, MeWe) has not been included due to privacy concerns and accessibility issues.

Content from Facebook groups and Instagram profiles that did not mention 'Australia' have also not been included due to limitations filtering these conversations by geography.

Metrics glossary

Interactions	Likes + comments + shares. Does not include Twitter comments.
Video views	The number of times a video was watched for an aggregate of at least 3 seconds. Does not include Twitter video views for YouTube views on Facebook.
Likes	The number of likes and Facebook reactions (e.g. Angry, Haha).
Comments	The number of comments. Does not include Twitter comments.
Shares	The total number of content re-posts or re-shares. Instagram does not include an option to re-share a post.
Potential impressions	The sum of followers (e.g. Person A posted once and had a follower count of 100, Person B posted twice and had a follower count of 50. Total potential impressions = 200).

MISINFORMATION / DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

What are misinformation and disinformation?

Misinformation is false, misleading or deceptive information that is spread by ordinary users without the intent to cause harm.

Disinformation refers to purposeful creation or spreading of false, misleading or deceptive information to cause harm. Disinformation can be spread for profit or for political purposes. It is often spread or amplified by networks of multiple social media accounts and automated systems called bots. Platforms often refer to this as inauthentic behaviour.

As intent is difficult to ascertain, the line between disinformation and misinformation is often unclear. Disinformation is often picked up by ordinary users who then share it through their own social media channels. In this study we have focused on the online interactions between and content shared by members of online communities and have not sought to identify bot activity. For these reasons, in this report we use misinformation as an umbrella term to cover verifiably false, misleading or deceptive information shared in online communities.

Three core narratives in Australia

This study identifies and maps three key narratives to help explore the spread of misinformation amongst Australian users of major social media platforms. These include the mechanisms by which misinformation is spread and amplified, as well as identifying key influencers of misinformation.

The three narratives that will be discussed in this report are anti-lockdown, anti-vaccine, and anti-5G. After observing an overlap between the Australian support base, the anti-lockdown narrative was expanded to include the QAnon conspiracy.

Of the three narratives (over the period examined) over a 12 month period, the highest volume of social media mentions in Australia focussed on anti-lockdown and QAnon. However, the anti-vaccines narrative received the highest level of interactions, driven by accounts with larger audiences, and therefore delivering greater reach (i.e. potential impressions).

Volume of open social mentions and interactions by key narrative; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

NARRATIVE	MENTIONS	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	VIDEO VIEWS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
Anti-vaccine	31,054	2,285,973	593,180	555,796	5,271,078	460,145,705
QAnon	23,815	543,342	77,284	53,598	1,952,814	80,141,435
Anti-lockdown	14,088	1,271,841	230,670	211,442	2,549,454	114,557,378
Anti-5G	7,666	225,069	41,993	50,716	307,563	45,949,643
Grand total	76,623	4,326,225	943,127	871,552	10,080,909	700,794,161

Fig 1. Analysis includes the total sample of 76,623 conversations. Video views do not include YouTube videos posted on Facebook. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

Volume of narrative mentions

An analysis of the volume of conversation shows a shift in the narrative from anti-lockdown and QAnon to anti-vaccines, likely driven by the recent rollout of and growing concerns about COVID-19 vaccinations in Australia. Anti-5G conversations have declined since the June protest peak.

The spikes in conversations have been driven by local protests, reactions to and speculation regarding government policy, posts by influential public figures, and a stream of mostly negative news stories.

Volume of weekly mentions and interactions of key narratives; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

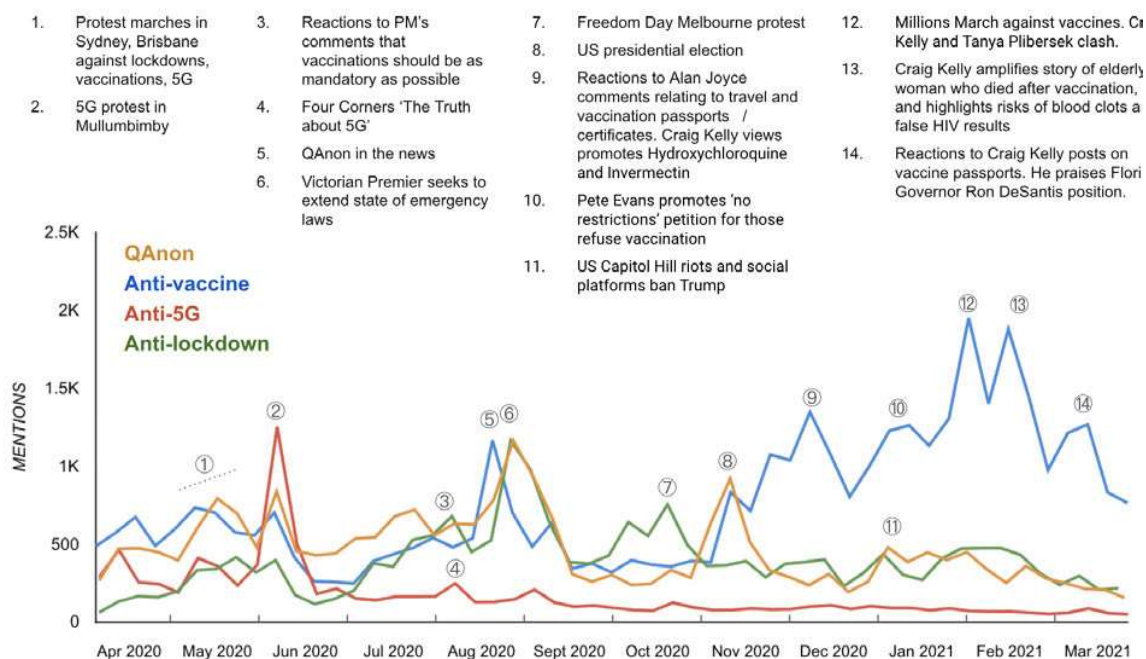


Fig 2. Analysis includes the total sample of 76,623 conversations. Trend lines created using keyword queries.

The highest volume of social media mentions by platform in Australia overall was Twitter, driven by the hyper-politicisation and conversational nature of the platform. However, Facebook and Instagram received the highest level of interactions, driven by accounts with larger audiences, and the more engaging nature of these platforms.

Volume of mentions and interactions of key narratives by platform; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

PLATFORM	MENTIONS	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	VIDEO VIEWS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
TWITTER	45,149	23,459	36,152	80,789	0	121,694,338
FACEBOOK	16,527	2,134,912	711,643	782,527	5,734,628	430,777,798
INSTAGRAM	14,270	2,139,991	183,939		4,044,083	114,996,577
REDDIT	461	17,467	7,791	0	0	30,194,932
YOUTUBE	216	10,396	3,602	8,236	302,198	3,130,516
Grand total	76,623	4,326,225	943,127	871,552	10,080,909	700,794,161

Fig 3. Analysis includes the total sample of 76,623 conversations. Video views do not include YouTube videos posted on Facebook, or videos shared on Twitter or Reddit. Instagram does not include an option to re-share a post. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

ANTI-LOCKDOWN AND QANON

Introduction

Anti-lockdown narratives have been a relatively constant presence online throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While expressing opposition to anti-lockdown policies is not misinformation, anti-lockdown sentiment is closely related to general skepticism about the existence or harms posed by COVID-19, as well as being an indicator of a general lack of trust in authoritative sources or official health advice. This overlaps with the anti-establishment views expressed by supporters of the QAnon conspiracy.

Originating on messaging board 4chan in 2017 as a theory about the existence of a shadowy anti-state figure known as 'Q', QAnon has grown into a global community of conspiracy theorists who have championed a number of anti-establishment narratives over the last five years. Conversation reached a crescendo in 2020, with the culmination of the US presidential election and rejection of COVID-19 social safety measures, like lockdowns and wearing masks.

QAnon supports a number of relatively unrelated narrative threads (from anti-lockdown to anti-vaccine) and have been particularly vocal in the last year on social media in many Western countries. Donald Trump is a key figure in the group's online conversation, with between 3% and 6% of all posts featuring him. The increased volume of global conversation around US politics has heightened awareness of QAnon's rhetoric.

How did QAnon and anti-lockdown narratives become connected in Australia?

QAnon's message may have been birthed on the 4-chan boards, but its message and deeply anti-government sentiment has been appropriated in many different countries. QAnon's messages in Australia gained traction due in part to public anger toward mask-wearing and lockdown. Some of the more outlandish theories came at the height of Melbourne's lockdown. For example, QAnon adherents promoted the theory that Melbourne's lockdown was in fact a cover to allow children stolen from their families to be trafficked through secret tunnels under the city.

While QAnon forms part of the anti-lockdown narrative in this analysis, its influence is felt across all 3 narratives, as discussed further in the confluence case study below. The anti-lockdown protests that

took place in November 2020, for example, included anti-vaccine and Stop-5G supporters with apparent ties to QAnon. Some attendees called for the arrest of Microsoft founder Bill Gates because of his involvement in the production of a coronavirus vaccine believed to contain microchips designed to control the population.

How did this look on social media?

As with the analysis across all 3 key narratives (Figure 3), the highest volume of anti-lockdown and QAnon social media mentions in Australia was on Twitter, but Facebook and Instagram received the highest number of interactions and potential impressions.

Volume of anti-lockdown / QAnon mentions and interactions of by platform; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

PLATFORM	MENTIONS	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	VIDEO VIEWS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
TWITTER	22,909	12,887	15,121	39,579	0	38,688,650
INSTAGRAM	11,594	1,126,739	100,211		2,753,162	59,584,452
FACEBOOK	3,225	665,324	188,154	224,846	1,720,697	87,018,222
REDDIT	160	8,864	4,032	0	0	8,992,212
YOUTUBE	15	1,369	436	615	28,409	415,277
Grand total	37,903	1,815,183	307,954	265,040	4,502,268	194,698,813

Fig 4. Analysis includes a sample of 37,903 conversations matching a keyword query. Video views do not include YouTube videos posted on Facebook, or videos shared on Twitter or Reddit. Instagram does not include an option to re-share a post. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

The most engaging pieces of individual content within this narrative relate to broad QAnon conspiracies, such as 'The Great Reset' and 'The Storm'. Some of these posts are from accounts that have since been suspended, such as [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] engaging anti-lockdown / QAnon content; Ranked by interactions (likes + comments + shares); Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

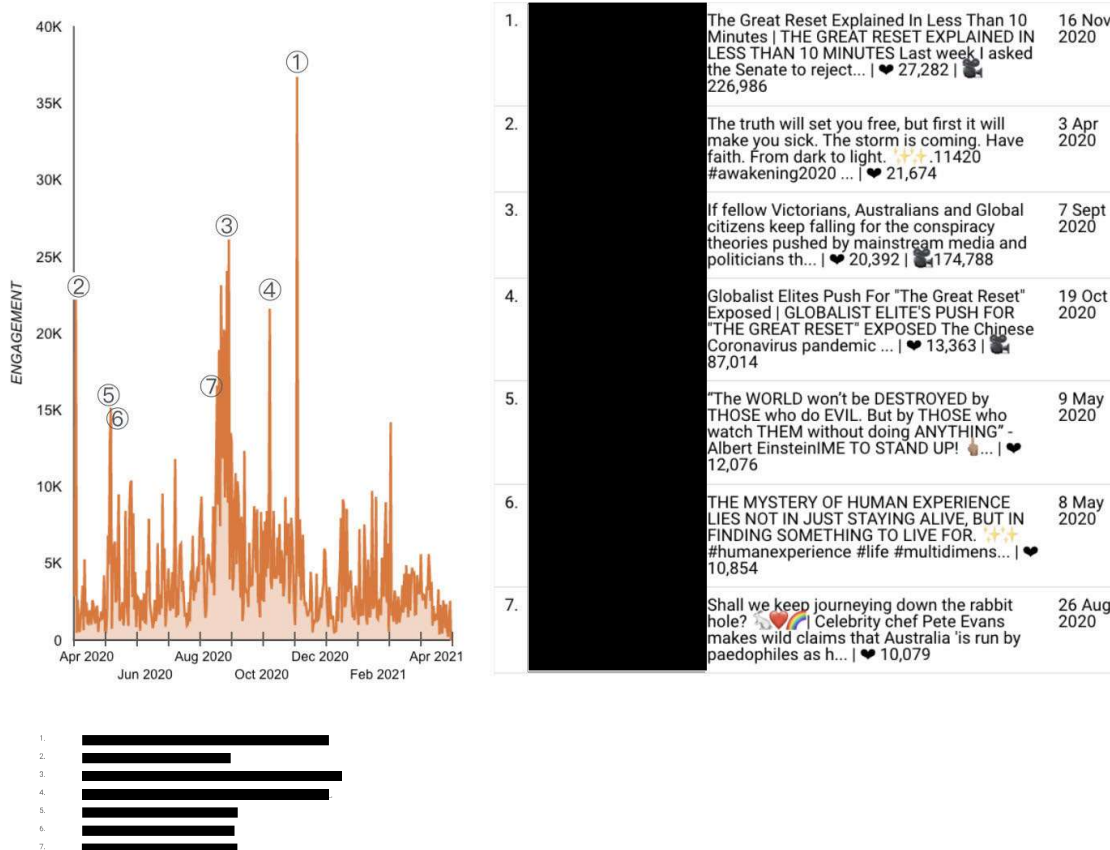


Fig 5. Not all links are accessible due to content removal by social platforms.

KEY THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The key issues and themes discussed in this report for anti-lockdown and QAnon narratives on social media platforms are influential global actors, migration to alternative social media platforms and key factors driving community.

Narratives are highly influenced by global actors

Anti-lockdown and QAnon conversations are spurred on by transnational influencers (the most famous being former US President Donald Trump). These influencers drive forward narratives like QAnon, pro-Trump, health freedoms and safe technology. While the narratives have their own impetus, they often respond and adapt to global events, politicians, health and wellness issues, and political commentators.

For countries outside of America, such as Australia, these narratives (like QAnon) can be twisted to fit local events such as the Melbourne lockdown.

A qualitative manual analysis of a random sample of 200 conversations showed that 58% of posts featured global themes, including news stories from non-Australian sources, medical reports, memes with global visual cues, shares from international accounts, mentions of QAnon or Trump. Only 42% of conversations in this sample featured local or personal themes including local news stories, personal messages, local protests, or memes with Australian visual cues.

Global versus local content themes; Manual analysis of a random sample of 200 misinformation conversations; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

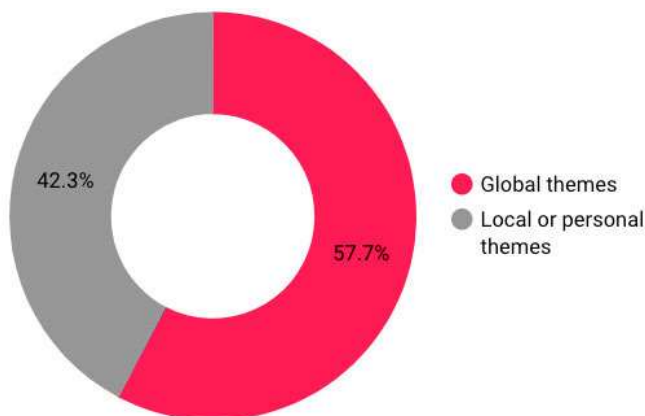


Fig 6. Themes were classified according to content themes and origin of content. For example a post featuring the Melbourne lockdown, a reaction to government policy or personal quote, was classified as local or personal. A video featuring an international doctor, a reshare of global influencer, a meme of Bill Gates, was classified as global.

Similarly, many of the links shared by Australian conspiratorial communities are to international sources. An analysis of Facebook links posted from our sample of Facebook pages and group accounts highlighted that 27% of links came from international websites, over half of which were from the United States. A further 16% of links were to YouTube videos or accounts that couldn't be assigned by geography.

Top 50 Facebook link sources by geography; Includes community sample of 200 conspiracy-driven Facebook group and page accounts; October 2020 to April 2021

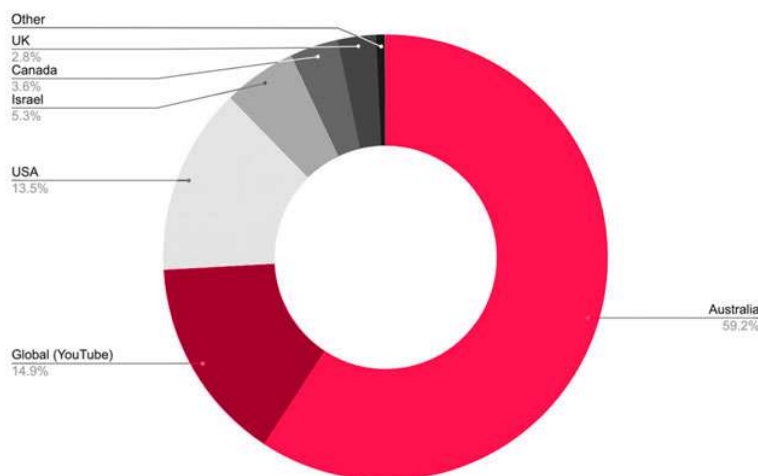
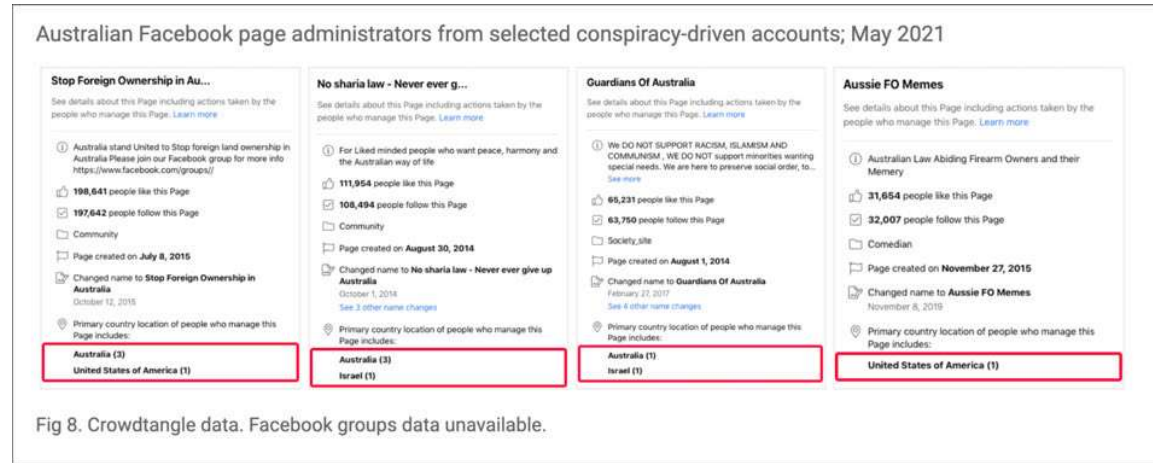


Fig 7. Where the country of origin was unknown, Similarweb analytics was used to identify the country of ownership. For the sites that did not register on Similarweb, websites were classified after manually scanning the site content.

There is some evidence that some social media accounts are being managed by international actors and administrators. An analysis of the Facebook page sample showed that 17% of pages had

international administrators, primarily from Israel, USA and Canada. However, this is not unique to conspiratorial communities, as a benchmark analysis of the overall top 100 Australian community pages showed that 28% of pages included international administrators.



As addressed above, certain global actors and influencers are treated with admiration within conspiracy-driven groups and are often considered the 'real' source of truth. In America, there is no greater global influencer than former US president Donald Trump, who played a key role in driving anti-lockdown and QAnon narratives. As seen in the results below, former President Trump's influence extended internationally, with considerably more mentions within the We Are Social Australian Facebook and Instagram sample than Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison.

Trump mentions versus Morrison in selected conspiracy-driven groups and accounts on Facebook and Instagram; May 2020 to April 2021

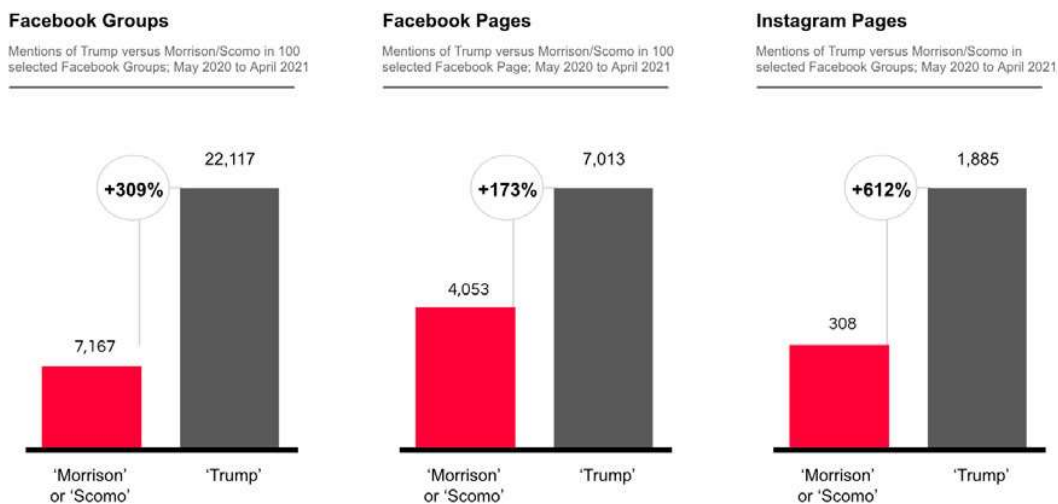


Fig 9. Keyword searches across all posts from conspiracy-driven groups and accounts including 100 Facebook groups, 100 Facebook pages and 91 Instagram profiles. Crowdtangle data.

Alternative social networks have become a safe harbour for conspiratorial communities

The increased scrutiny and pressure on mainstream social platforms to remove misinformation has caused conspiracy groups to migrate to more private social networks with less stringent moderation policies, including Telegram, Parler, MeWe and Gab.

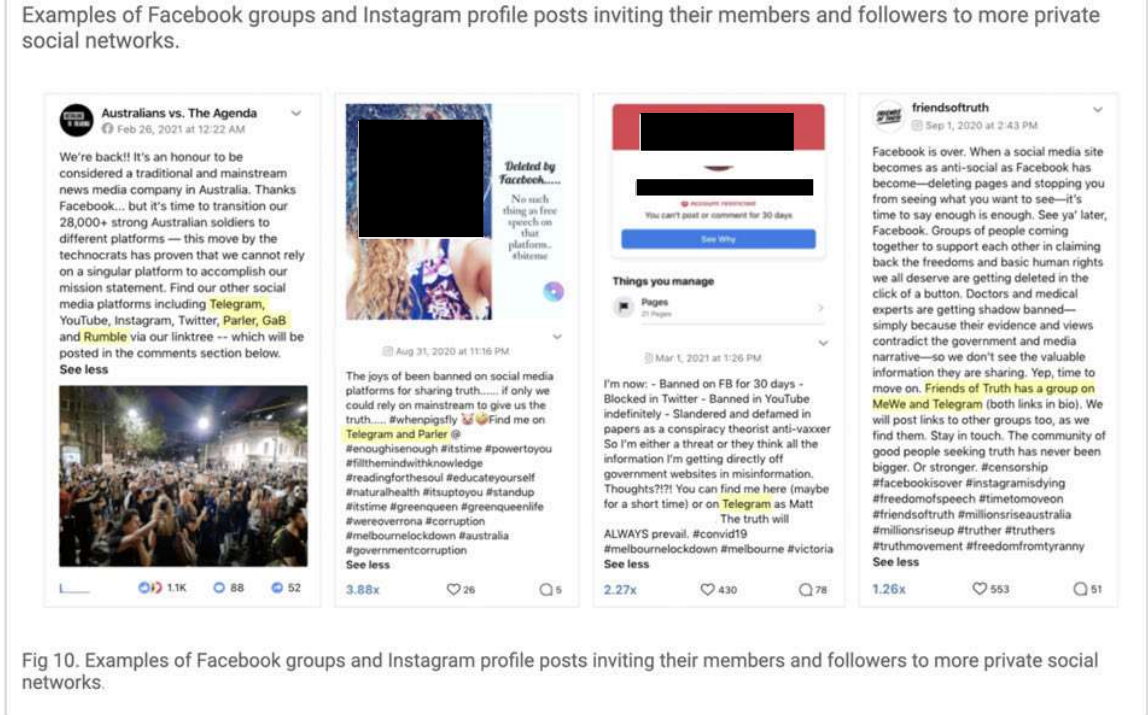


Fig 10. Examples of Facebook groups and Instagram profile posts inviting their members and followers to more private social networks.

There were 4,479 mentions of alternative social networks within our Facebook sample of 100 Facebook groups and 100 Facebook pages, with many inviting their audiences to follow them on those alternative social networks.

The following analysis of the most mentioned alternative social networks shows a spike in January 2021 which coincides with when Parler was taken down from the Apple and Google app stores and Amazon web services, and when Trump was removed from Facebook.

Mentions of alternative social networks by conspiratorial communities on Facebook; Includes Telegram, Parler, Gab, Rumble, MeWe; April 2020 to April 2021

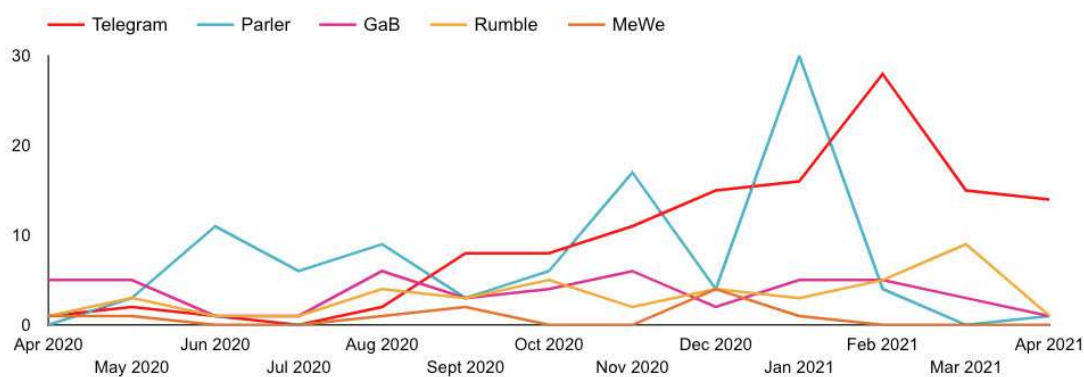


Fig 11. Community sample including Facebook groups and 100 Facebook pages.

The narrative which received the highest number of alternative social network mentions was the anti-lockdown and QAnon.

Mentions of alternative social networks by narrative; Includes Telegram, Parler, Gab, Rumble, MeWe; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

New Platforms	QAnon	Anti-vaccine	Anti-lockdown	Anti-5G
Telegram	33	28	23	11
Parler	66	2	3	3
Rumble	11	13	8	6
GaB	8	9	7	5
MeWe	3	1	1	4
Grand total	121	53	42	29

Fig 12. Total sample of conversations. Narrative mentions created using keyword queries.

The increase in the moderation of mainstream social platforms appears to have impacted Facebook group engagement. An analysis of Facebook conspiratorial community group posts highlighted a marked decline in posts following Facebook’s commitment to [reduce Facebook group misinformation in September 2020, and its ban of all QAnon material in October 2020](#). This may point to a shift in audiences away from Facebook in particular communities to alternative social networks.

Number of posts by selected conspiracy-driven Facebook groups; 1 April 2020 to 30 April 2021

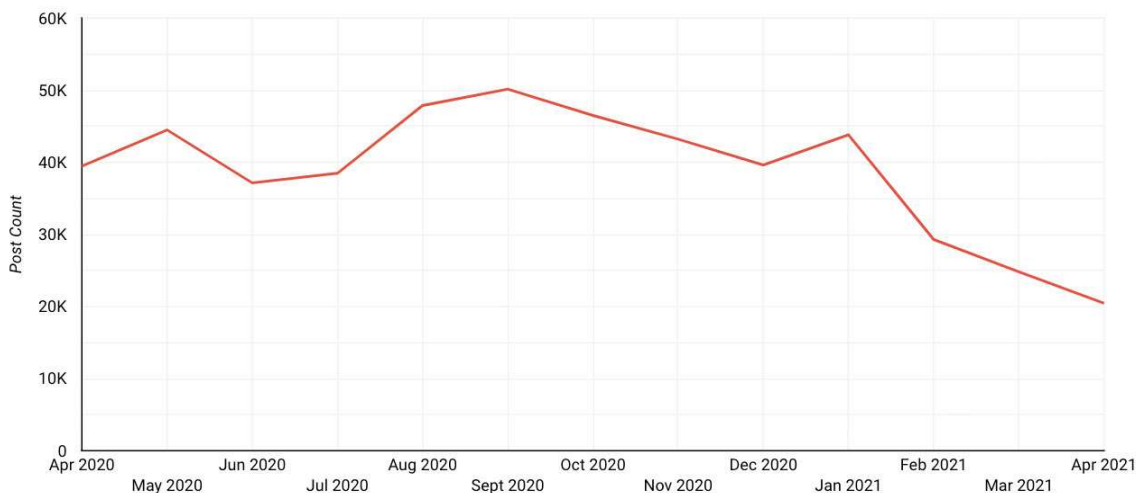


Fig 13. Community sample including 100 Facebook groups. Crowdtangle data.

Telegram case study

Telegram is the most talked-about alternative social network among conspiratorial communities. The platform offers unmoderated instant messaging and simple comment threads. Conspiratorial communities have grown quickly, driven by the attraction of global audiences, the ability to post more extreme content, high interaction rates, and the sharing of follower lists among groups.

Telegram posts highlights how conspiracy-driven groups and individuals are discovering like-minded communities.

AUSTRALIAN FREEDOM TELEGRAM CHANNELS
 Last Updated: April 28th 2021
 Forward and Subscribe

- Australia Freedom Rally
- Melbourne Freedom Rally
- Sydney Freedom Rally
- Brisbane Freedom Rally
- Adelaide Freedom Rally
- Perth Freedom Rally
- Reignite Democracy Australia
- Aussie Action Hub
- Guardian Angel
- Melbourne Blockchain Updates
- AustraliaOne Party
- Informed Medical Options Party
- Great Australian Party
- Advocate Me
- TruthS3c
- MMAMV Australia
- Victoria Freedom Keepers
- Vaccine Choice Australia
- DON'T Consent DON'T Comply
- Caldron Pool
- Millions United Australia
- Wake up Australia
- Australia Awakens

Fig 14. Posts identified via manual searches of conspiracy-driven Telegram accounts.

These lists helped us identify a sample of some of the more popular conspiracy-driven Australian Telegram accounts. [REDACTED] has the largest Telegram account from our sample, with 34k members and an average reach of 11k people per post.

Identifiable conspiracy-driven Australian Telegram account members, post reach and posts per day; May 2021

	Accounts	Members ▾	Average Post Reach	Posts Per Day
1.	[REDACTED]	34,223	11,100	12
2.	Reignite Democracy Australia	8,542	3,800	5
3.	[REDACTED]	7,833	6,500	3
4.	Australian National Review	7,350	3,000	100
5.	Vaccine Aus Choice	4,292	1,500	9
6.	Advocate Me	3,579	3,800	3
7.	Fanosthevoice	3,511	3,000	5
8.	[REDACTED]	3,363	1,500	7
9.	Adams Economics	3,271	9,500	5
10.	[REDACTED]	3,249	3,100	6
11.	COVID Vaccine Information, Injuries and Deaths	2,864	560	28
12.	Guardian Angel - Melbourne Anti-Lockdown Protest	2,771	1,300	3
13.	WakeUp Australia	1,673	539	23
14.	Tv Guide	1,587	438	7
15.	Friends Of Truth	1,577	766	3
16.	Melb Freedom Rally	1,576	2,300	2
17.	Australia Awakens	1,394	535	7
18.	[REDACTED]	1,378	762	8
19.	Millions United Australia	1,172	281	14
20.	Australia Freedom Rally	1,074	8,000	6

Fig 15. List created using manual searches. List not exhaustive. Telegram Analytics sourced by tgstat.com.

In Australia, usage of the Telegram app has been on a growth trajectory. App store rankings first increased noticeably in early September 2020, which may be related to the organisation of the anti-lockdown 'Freedom Day' rallies. Australian downloads of the Telegram app peaked in early January 2021 for both Android and iOS devices, which is very likely tied to the US Capitol riots and Facebook/Twitter removing content related to the 'stopthesteal' and QAnon narratives.

Telegram app store ranking in Australia for both Android and Apple (iPhone only) devices; April 2020 to May 2021

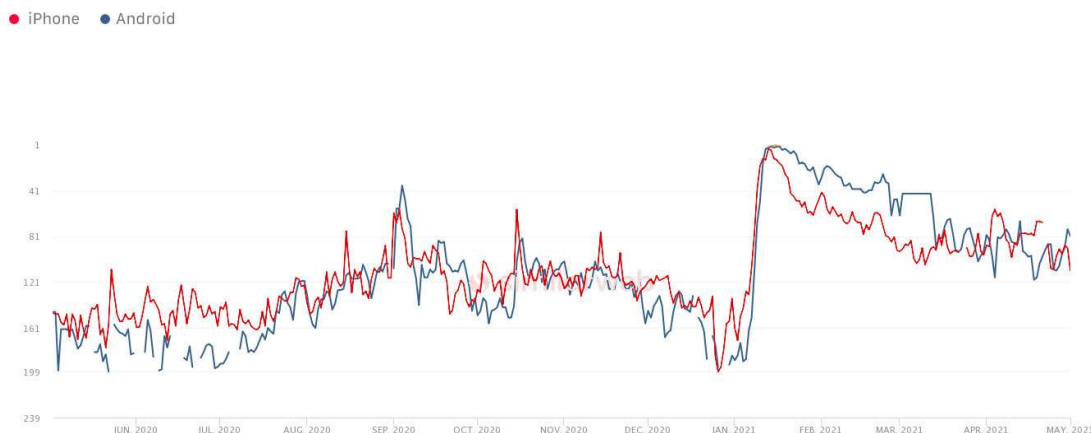


Fig 16. Similarweb Analytics data.

Outrage drives engagement but other techniques build community

Communities engage with stories that often illicit outrage, best demonstrated by the volume of angry reactions relative to other reactions. Compared to posts from mainstream Australian media or popular Australian public figures, conspiracy-driven Facebook groups have a much higher proportion of Angry reactions.

Share of Facebook reactions within conspiracy-driven groups, Australian media pages, and Australian public figures; May 2020 to April 2021

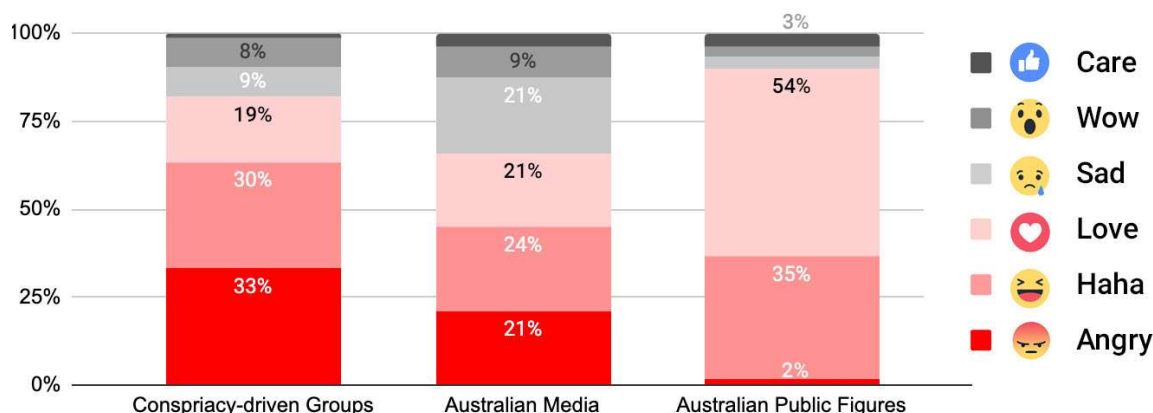


Fig 17. Includes 100 selected conspiracy-driven Facebook groups, 49 Australian mainstream media Facebook pages, and 745 of Australian most followed individuals on Facebook. Crowdtangle data.

A common cause of outrage within these communities is when platforms take active steps to moderate their conversations, such as fact-checking labels and content deletions. To avoid content moderation, users often intentionally misspell keywords to avoid being taken down or reported.

This technique has been used prominently in the context of the anti-vaccine narrative, discussed further below. Some frequently seen examples include: v@cc, v8ccine, vacc ine, vaccin, vacks, vakseen, vackseen, vacseen, va((ine, vacx, vakseen, vax, vaxcine, vaxseen, vaxxed.

Examples of anti-vaccine content using misspelled keywords.

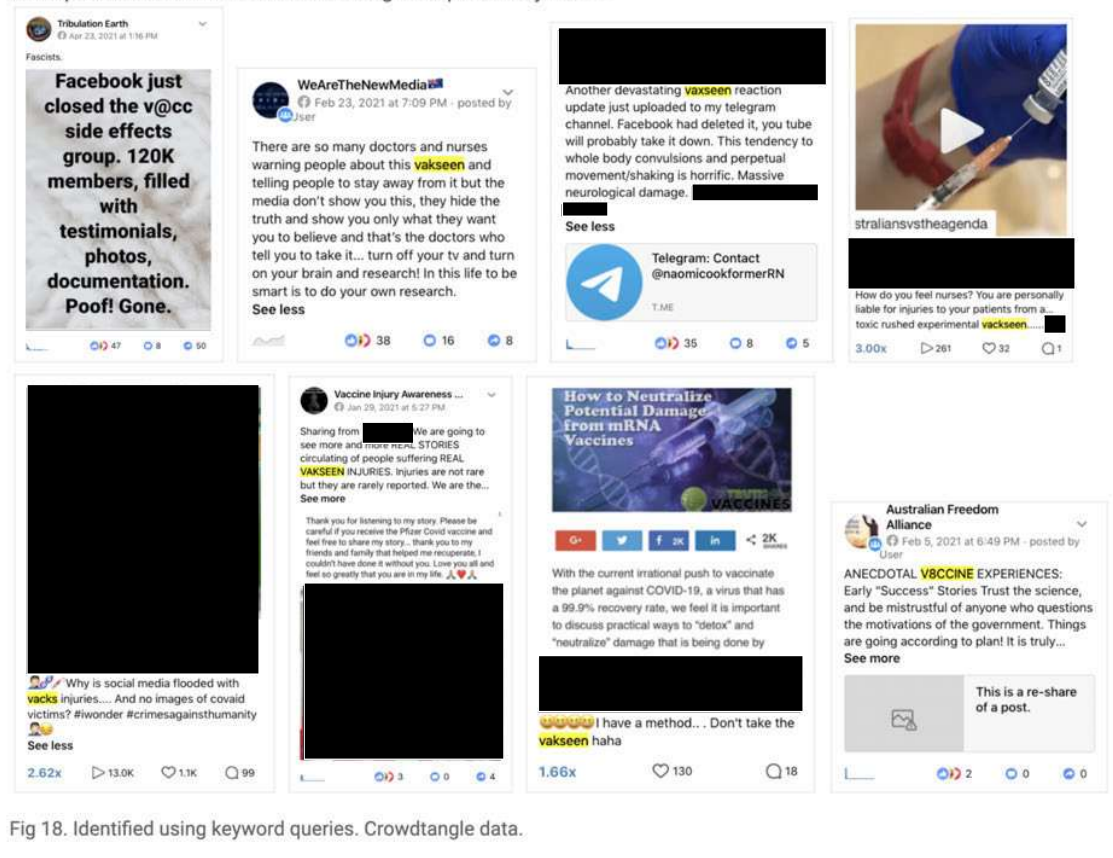


Fig 18. Identified using keyword queries. Crowdtangle data.

Content is often meme-like, loaded with symbolism, highly visual, well designed and shared at a high velocity.

Relative to other content types, Photos received the highest volume of mentions and interactions, driven by propaganda memes, news screenshots and belief statements. Video on Facebook and Instagram received the highest volume of +3 sec video views driven by media clips, interviews, and documentaries.

Volume of mentions and interactions of key narratives by content type; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

POST TYPE	MENTIONS -	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	VIDEO VIEWS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
PHOTO	61,194	3,105,759	524,178	463,127	250,742	369,088,671
LINK	7,238	384,996	139,265	92,850	0	197,672,273
* TWITTER OTHER	4,347	160,043	26,018	23,611	1,260,293	35,037,548
VIDEO	2,400	478,225	165,310	200,016	7,423,094	52,770,117
TEXT	711	97,983	38,982	40,518	0	31,245,656
YOUTUBE	457	32,704	9,225	12,037	0	7,709,742
LIVE VIDEO	276	66,515	40,149	39,393	1,146,780	7,270,154
Grand total	76,623	4,326,225	943,127	871,552	10,080,909	700,794,161

*Twitter Other includes text and link posts

Fig 19. Analysis includes the total sample of 76,623 conversations. Video views do not include YouTube videos posted on Facebook, or videos shared on Twitter or Reddit. Instagram does not include an option to re-share a post. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

The format and style of the conversations we observed suggest a deeper understanding among leaders of these communities of what makes content go viral. The idea of belonging to a group, sharing in secret or hidden knowledge, or solving a deeper mystery (e.g. Q ‘drops’) strengthens their sense of community. Users see themselves as ‘free thinkers’ or ‘truth seekers’, who avoid mainstream news and rely on their communities for alternative news.

Example highlights how misinformation is being spread via like-minded community members and alternative news.

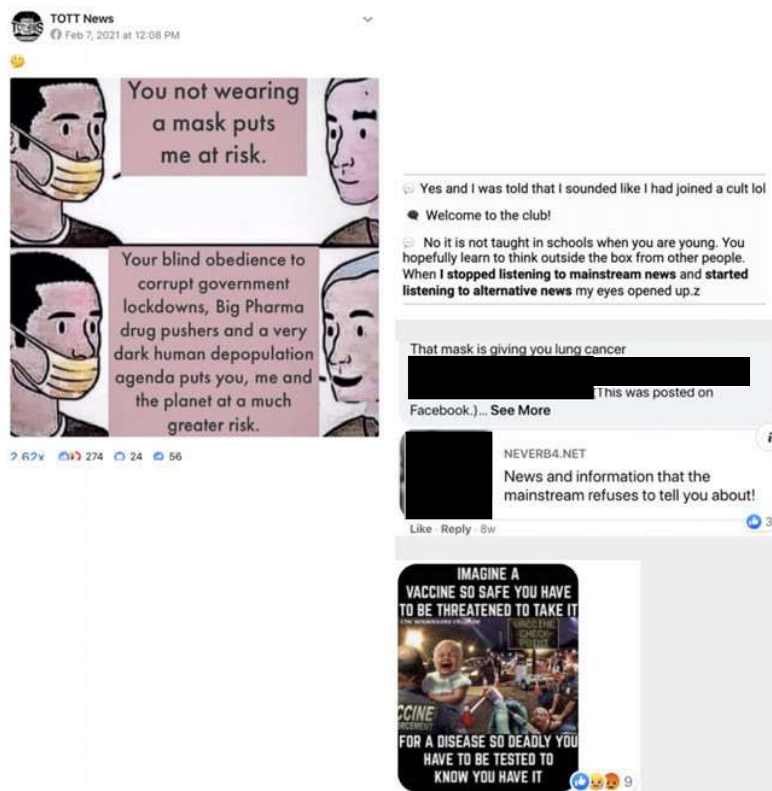


Fig 20. Identified using keyword queries. Crowdtangle data.

ANTI-VACCINE

Introduction

A typical anti-vax tactic is to talk down the disease threat and exaggerate the vaccine threat. Similar to QAnon and the anti-lockdown narratives, the anti-vax narratives hint at greater conspiracies and look to local and global influencers who are standing up against popular opinion for what is perceived as the 'greater good.'

Until recently, anti-vax has been considered a relatively fringe movement in Australia. However, conversation surrounding vaccine safety has surged in the face of COVID-19, as the pandemic has been a catalyst for citizens everywhere to engage in conversations about the prospect of being vaccinated. Concerns have been further heightened in recent months as more information has become available on the rare but possible side effects of certain vaccines.

Broadly speaking, there are three main attitudinal categories towards vaccination; those who understand the merits of vaccination, dogmatic anti-vaxxers and a third group that lies in the middle who have questions or are undecided. This report focuses on the content and drivers of

misinformation around the anti-vax narrative and how it combines with other anti-establishment threads.

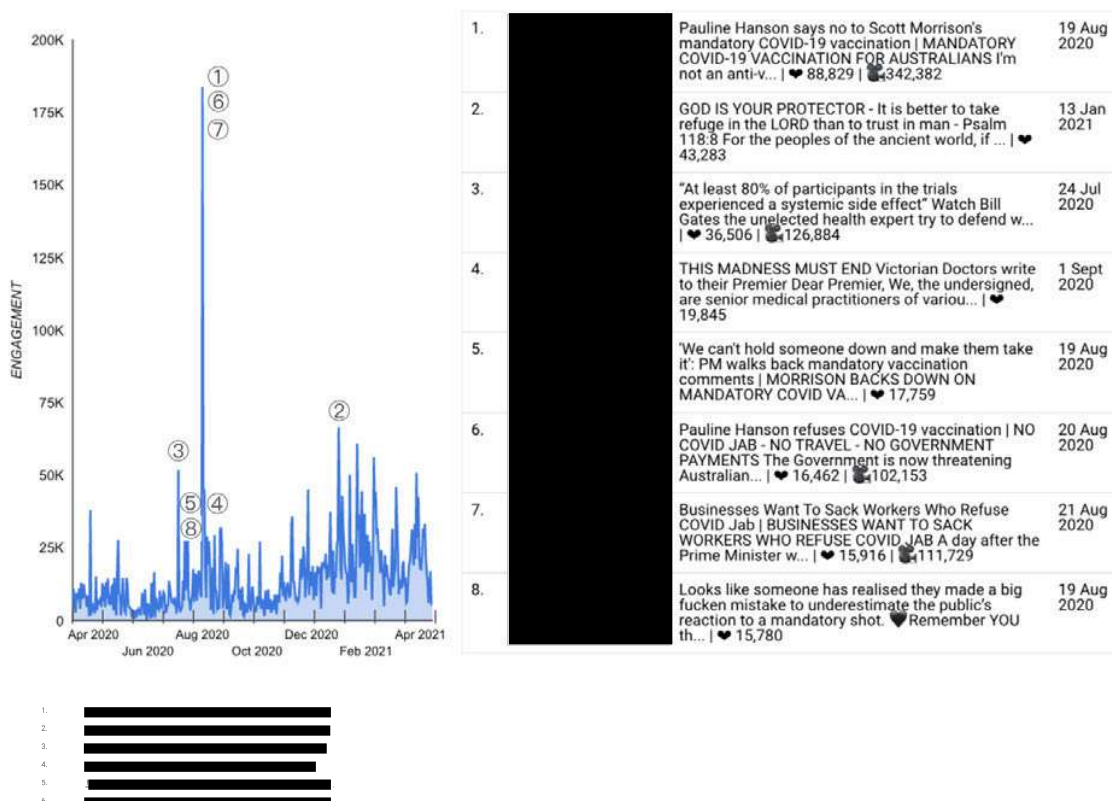
Volume of anti-vaccine mentions and interactions of by platform; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

PLATFORM	MENTIONS	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	VIDEO VIEWS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
TWITTER	16,050	7,964	15,474	32,676	0	70,840,520
FACEBOOK	12,435	1,379,064	500,668	515,575	3,829,264	322,446,902
INSTAGRAM	2,126	883,706	71,459		1,196,509	48,189,840
REDDIT	243	6,525	2,413	0	0	16,011,104
YOUTUBE	200	8,714	3,166	7,545	245,305	2,657,339
Grand total	31,054	2,285,973	593,180	555,796	5,271,078	460,145,705

Fig 21. Analysis includes a sample of 31,054 conversations. Video views do not include YouTube videos posted on Facebook, or videos shared on Twitter or Reddit. Instagram does not include an option to re-share a post. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

The most engaging pieces of content under the anti-vax narrative focused on the government's plan for mandatory COVID-19 vaccines and the promotion of an 'inadequately tested vaccine'. This included a meme post suggesting that readers should not put faith in a vaccine but in God, and a video falsely alleging that 80% of people who tried a COVID-19 vaccine experienced systemic side effects.

Most engaging anti-vaccine content; Ranked by interactions (likes + comments + shares); Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021



7. [Redacted]
8. [Redacted]

Fig 22. Not all links are accessible due to content removal by the platforms.

KEY THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The key issues and themes discussed in this report for anti-vaccine narratives on social media platforms are unmoderated comment threads and local influencers.

The path to misinformation starts innocuously in unmoderated comment threads

Misinformation narratives often start with innocuous shared posts, general comments and dialogue with other users. In the case of anti-vax sentiment, this may appear as legitimate concerns around vaccine safety or the sharing of research or news stories highlighting potential risks. Discussions in comment threads will then often progress to more specific misinformed ideas, supported by false news and misleading information, including links to conspiratorial websites and videos. News services and individuals who reference conspiratorial themes, such as anti-institutions or anti-mainstream media, generally attract more extreme commenters.

Examples showcase how articles from Australian mainstream media, shared on Facebook, can lead to conspiracy-driven individuals posting misinformation in the comments section.

Fig 23. Identified using keyword queries. Crowdtangle data.

Local influencers fuel and amplify narratives

As mentioned above, anti-vaxxers revere and cheer on local influencers for taking a stand against institutions and for supporting their beliefs in a safe space for misinformation, giving these influencers “hero status.”

These influencers have widespread reach and drive the narrative forward. In Australia, key local influencers include [REDACTED]. Following is a list of the most engaging accounts by total interactions and by narrative. It is worth noting that 12 of the top 20 influencers have posted on all 4 narratives included in this study.

Top 20 accounts mentioning at least one of the selected narratives; April 2020 to March 2021

	ACCOUNT	INTERACTIONS	MENTIONS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
1.	[REDACTED]	536,519	120	32,275,170
2.	[REDACTED]	459,351	135	11,791,555
3.	[REDACTED]	369,407	155	8,744,511
4.	Australians Vs. The Agenda	261,156	475	7,333,912
5.	[REDACTED]	196,127	11	4,189,967
6.	[REDACTED]	145,519	158	3,156,367
7.	[REDACTED]	133,085	164	13,601,760
8.	[REDACTED]	131,961	128	2,148,605
9.	Reignite Democracy Australia	126,430	136	6,980,777
10.	Unity Link Official	126,221	2,224	4,394,855
11.	Friends Of Truth	112,158	355	2,156,143
12.	[REDACTED]	82,021	29	1,341,967
13.	[REDACTED]	79,915	417	1,921,572
14.	Informed Medical Options Party...	73,473	121	1,491,872
15.	[REDACTED]	72,524	261	12,782,139
16.	[REDACTED]	71,875	38	14,922,456
17.	[REDACTED]	62,239	150	395,147
18.	Great Australian Party	61,118	58	1,601,664
19.	Know Your Rights Group	57,989	70	2,666,371
20.	Nuffies Of Australian Politics	57,539	69	3,611,908

Fig 24. Account content identified using keyword queries. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

Top 20 account interactions by narrative; April 2020 to March 2021

Top 20 – ACCOUNT	Anti-vaccine	Anti-lockdown	QAnon	Anti-5G
[REDACTED]	419,921	80,767	30,447	5,384
[REDACTED]	324,145	128,496	3,349	3,361
[REDACTED]	171,819	188,427	3,012	6,149
Australians Vs. The Agenda	142,081	102,005	16,995	75
Pauline Hanson's Please Explain	179,610	16,517		
[REDACTED]	125,491	19,534		494
[REDACTED]	3,638	125,479	1,292	2,676
[REDACTED]	113,541	15,773	2,647	
Reignite Democracy Australia	74,120	50,112		2,198
Unity Link Official	3,016	49,323	72,274	1,608
Friends Of Truth	5,457	84,042	22,156	503
[REDACTED]	13,409	68,612		
[REDACTED]	414	71,071	7,524	906
Informed Medical Options Party - I...	55,699	15,640	159	1,975
[REDACTED]	47,946	19,725	1,850	3,003
[REDACTED]	333	918	69,037	1,587
[REDACTED]	7,299	34,599	19,686	655
[REDACTED]	48,710	12,244	164	
Know Your Rights Group	31,882	26,107		
Nuffies Of Australian Politics	25,367	9,447	11,982	10,743

Fig 25. Account content identified using keyword queries. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

ANTI-5G

Introduction

The global rollout of 5G has spawned numerous conspiracy theories about the supposed health impacts of electromagnetic energy (EME) radiation and 5G technology. What had been a fairly dormant narrative was amplified by the early stages of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Theories ranged from a view that 5G's millimetre wave technology was secretly developed by governments as a weapon to threaten and control people, to the belief that 5G is linked to the emergence of COVID-19, with the coronavirus being deliberately released so 5G could be rolled out without opposition while communities were in lockdown. All these theories are demonstrably false, and have been publicly refuted by industry, government and leading health officials.

Nevertheless, these viral claims drove believers to hold protests during 2020 and to physically attack mobile phone towers around the world, including in Australia.

Volume of anti-5G mentions and interactions of by platform; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to March 2021

PLATFORM	MENTIONS	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	VIDEO VIEWS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
TWITTER	6,190	2,608	5,557	8,534	0	12,165,168
FACEBOOK	867	90,524	22,821	42,106	184,667	21,312,674
INSTAGRAM	550	129,546	12,269		94,412	7,222,285
REDDIT	58	2,078	1,346	0	0	5,191,616
YOUTUBE	1	313	0	76	28,484	57,900
Grand total	7,666	225,069	41,993	50,716	307,563	45,949,643

Fig 26. Analysis includes a sample of 7,666 conversations matching a keyword query. Video views do not include YouTube videos posted on Facebook, or videos shared on Twitter or Reddit. Instagram does not include an option to re-share a post. Potential impressions is the aggregate sum of all followers from posts.

Instagram influencers and former athletes drove engagement in the anti-5G sample, referencing peer reviewed reports that describe injuries from wireless technologies, and claiming scientists and medical doctors had shown a link between tumours and the EMR exposure.

Most engaging anti-5G content; Ranked by interactions (likes + comments + shares); Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

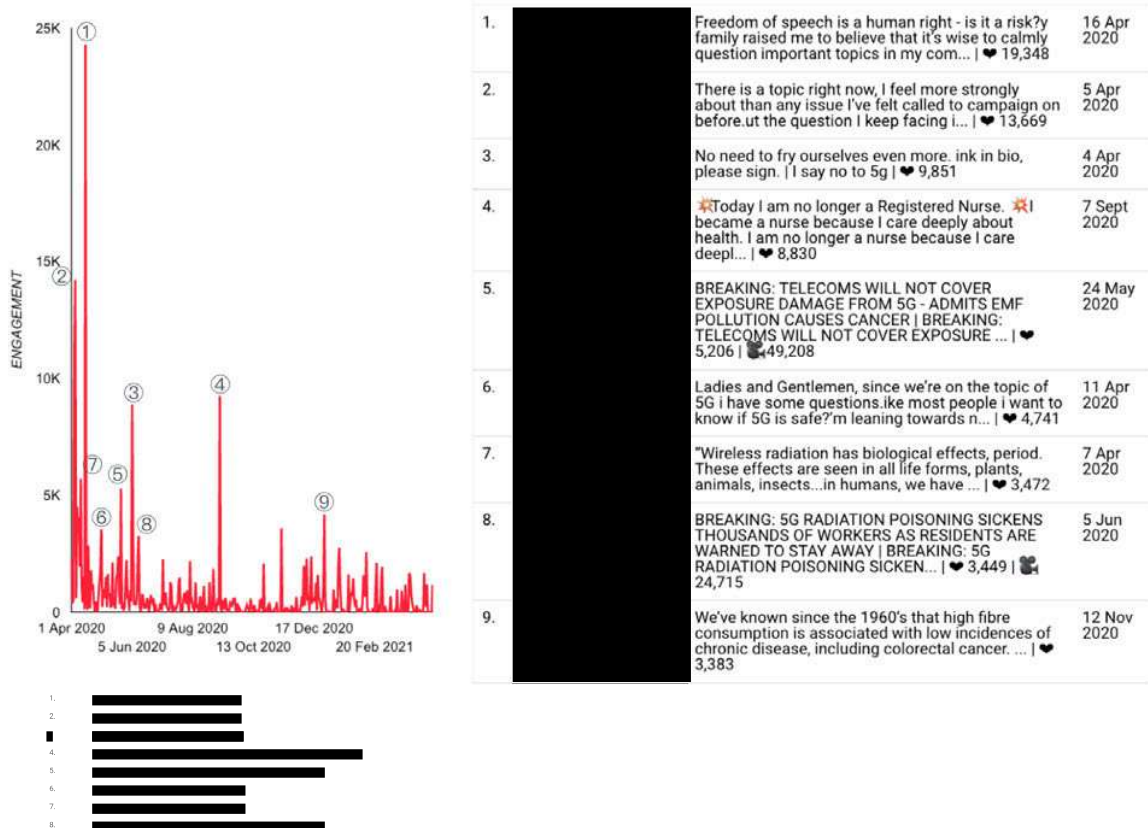


Fig 27. Not all links are accessible due to content removal by the platforms.

KEY THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The key issues and themes discussed in this report for Stop-5G narratives on social media platforms are proliferation of local Facebook groups and mixing mainstream and alternative news on social media platforms.

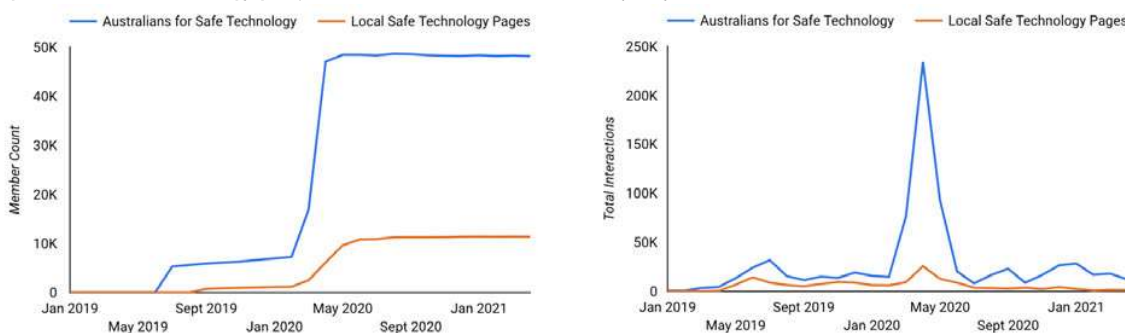
Proliferation of local Australians for Safe Technology Facebook groups

The use of Community Groups on Facebook has been a pivotal tactic for the Stop-5G movement. One of the biggest groups originally called ‘Stop5G Australia’ emerged in 2019 in support of a global appeal against 5G. It was renamed to ‘Australians for Safe Technology’ in April 2020, likely to avoid action by Facebook to remove misinformation linking 5G to COVID-19

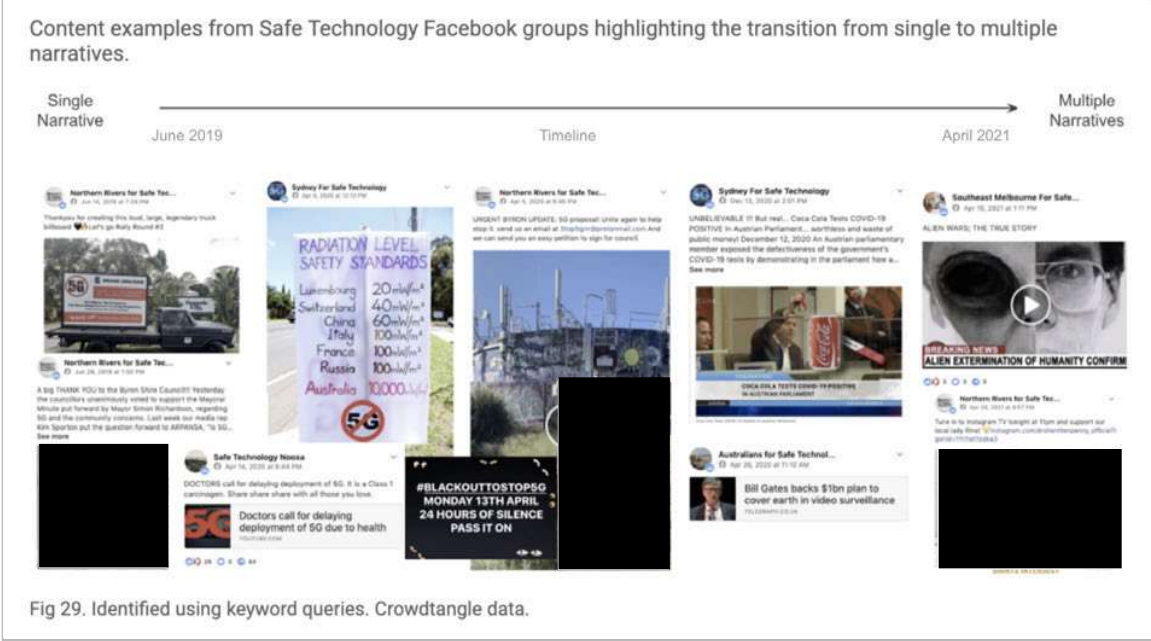
As of May this year, Australians for Safe Technology has become the largest Stop-5G Facebook group in the nation. Between March 2020 to April 2020 the Safe Technology groups grew to 13 in number and added 44.6K new members. New members were engaged by a large increase in posts from ~500 a month to 2.4K in April 2020. The group also received a large increase in engagement driven by the Mullumbimby protest, health and safety stories from alternative news sources and Huawei’s exclusion from 5G contracts in Australia. Following April 2020, engagement decreased as the page reduced its posting back to its pre-April levels.

Anti-5G members and interactions of the Australians for Safe Technology Facebook group and 13 local Facebook groups in Jan 2019 to Apr 2021

Fig 28. Local safe technology groups include Tweed, Northern Rivers, Sydney, Sutherland Shire, Geelong, George River, Mornington Peninsula, Southeast Melbourne, Noosa, Frankston, Mackay, Moreton Bay, Casey. Crowdtangle data.



A content analysis of Australians for Safe Technology shows a shift from a single Stop-5G narrative to multiple misinformation narratives. This shows that access to one conspiracy narrative can lead to belief in many conspiracy narratives.



Impact of mainstream media

The Four Corners program entitled ‘The Truth about 5G’ aired on the 3rd of August 2020 and highlights how media stories can generate engagement on misinformation narratives. Following the 5G protests during the first half of 2020, there was a significant drop-off in the anti-5G conversations. The airing of the program led to a small but noticeable spike in 5G mentions, briefly reigniting the narrative. Most of the mentions came from Safe Technology groups who refuted the evidence and shared alternative research as proof of their claim.

Volume of weekly anti-5G mentions; Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; April 2020 to 12 April 2021

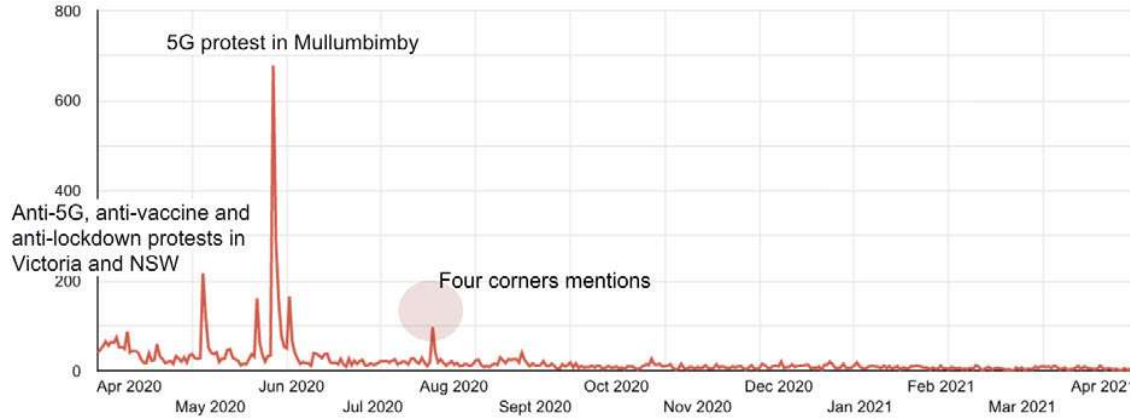


Fig 30. Analysis includes the total sample of 7,666 conversations. Trend line created using keyword queries.

Examples of posts mentioning Four Corners program entitled 'The Truth about 5G' within anti-5G communities.

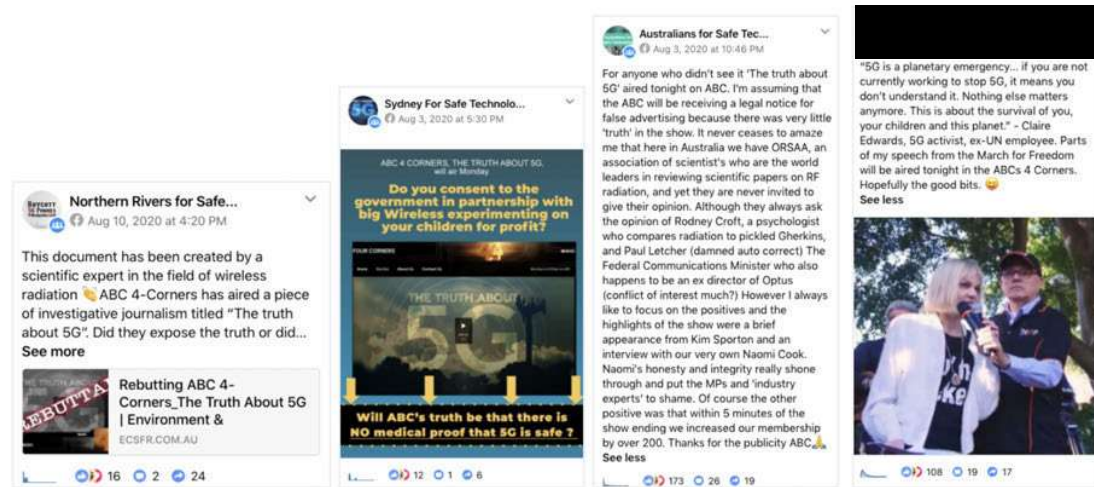


Fig 31. Identified using keyword queries. Crowdtangle data.

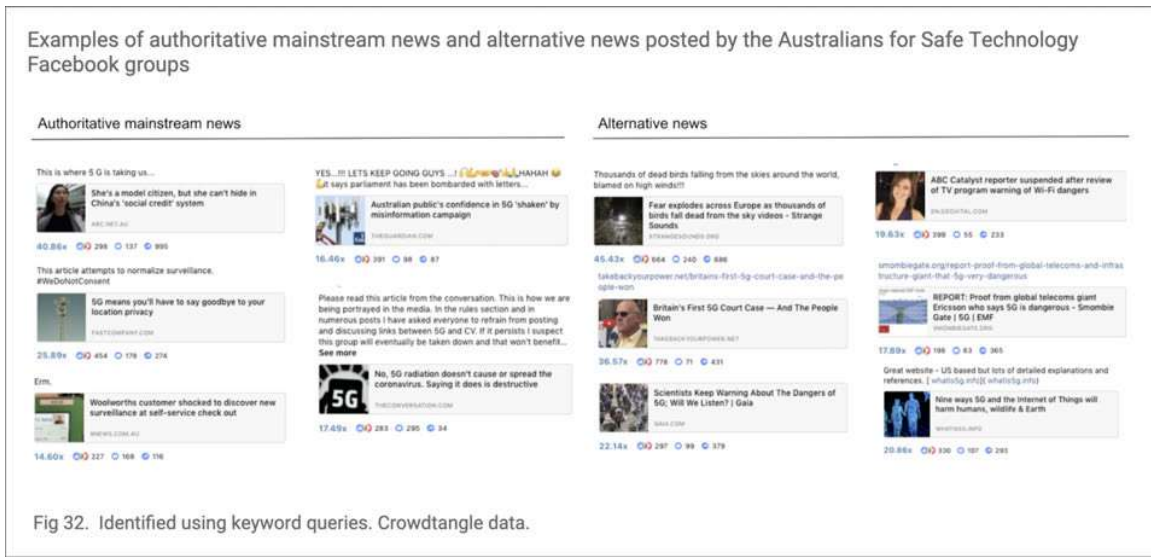
Narratives are weaponized with mix of authoritative mainstream news and alternative news

Conspiratorial communities share links to news from both mainstream and alternative news sources, as well as YouTube videos, Facebook pages and groups, and advocacy organisations. [Appendix C](#) provides a list of news sources appearing in the sample and indicates which category they have been assigned to.

Mainstream news sources in the sample include major Australian broadcasters and newspapers (including online-only newspapers) as well as some international news sources. These news sources are subject to professional editorial standards and some form of independent oversight. In our sample, conspiracy communities tend to reframe news from mainstream news sources to suit their narratives. They are particularly interested in sharing stories relating to the health impacts or efficacy of vaccines and or rights issues relating to lockdowns or vaccine passports.

Alternative news refers to both Australian and international news and opinion websites outside the mainstream media. These sources tend not to be subject to professional editorial standards or independent oversight. While they exhibit a range of approaches, many would rate poorly against criteria used to assess news quality or credibility, such as those developed by the [Trust Project](#) or the [Journalism Trust Initiative](#). This can range from lower attention to accuracy, impartiality and use of authoritative sources, to the systematic publication of false and misleading content. The same is true for the sources we've designated as alternative video sharing sites, alternative blogs, alternative Facebook Pages and alternative news journalists.

Australians for Safe Technology Facebook groups show how misinformation narratives are being weaponized using authoritative mainstream news and alternative news.



The following charts show the news and information sources most frequently linked to in the 200 selected Facebook groups and pages in the community sample. Top mainstream sources include Sky News, ABC, The Australian and The Daily Mail.

Top alternative news sites include Rebel News, PoliticsOnline.net, and personalinterpretation.com, while top alternative video sites include BitChute and odysee.com

Top 50 Facebook link sources by segment; Includes community sample of 200 conspiracy-driven Facebook group and page accounts; October 2020 to April 2021

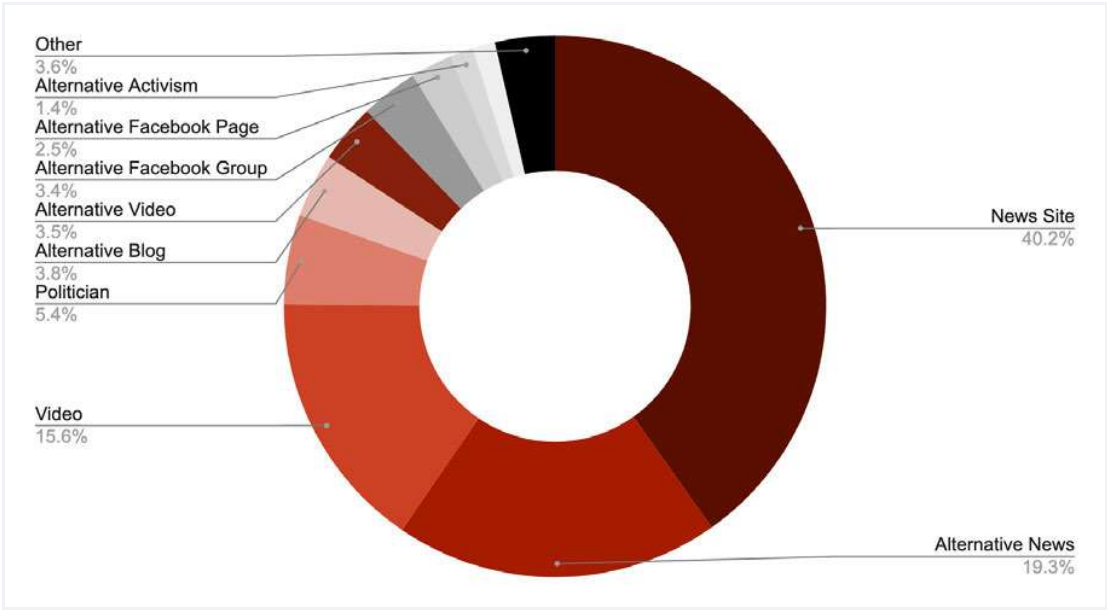


Fig 33. Facebook links extracted by domain or social network page and manually classified into segments. Classification provided in [Appendix C](#).

Top 50 Facebook link sources; Includes community sample of 200 conspiracy-driven Facebook group and page accounts; October 2020 to April 2021

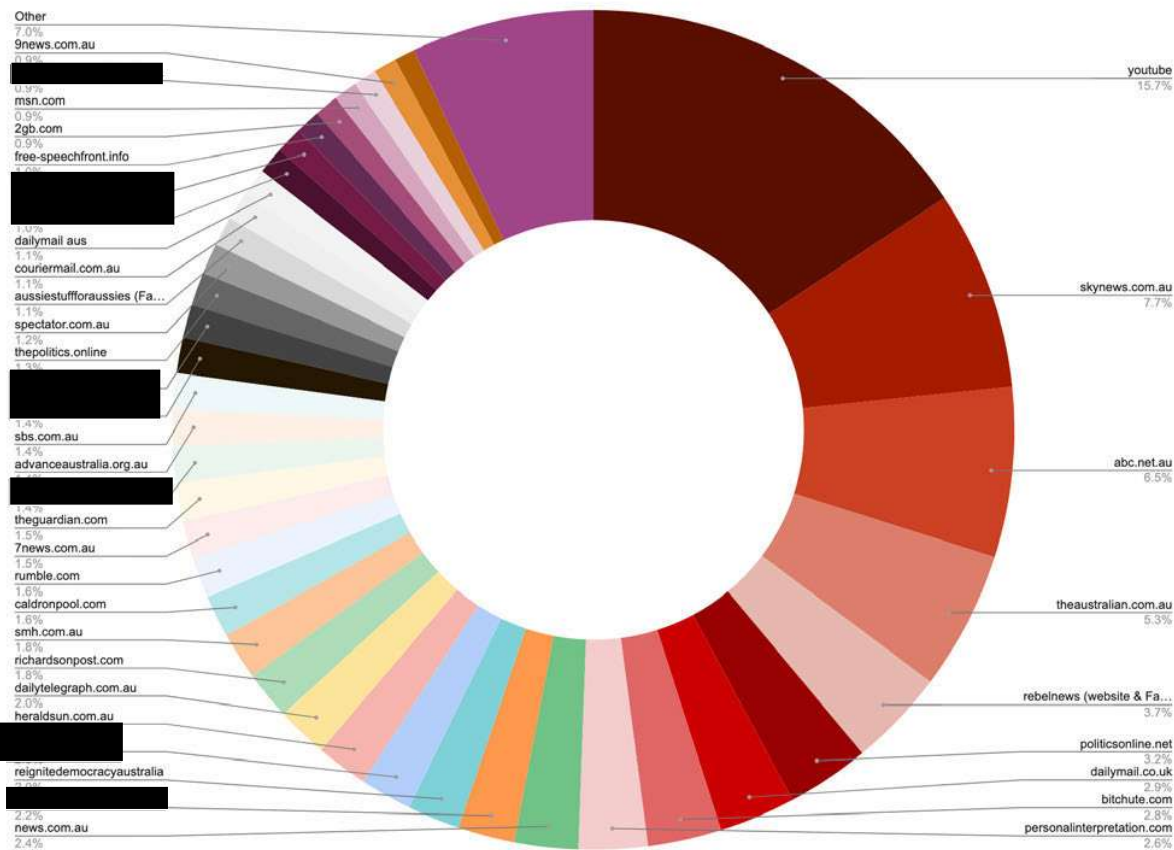


Fig 34. Facebook links extracted by domain or social network page. Full list provided in [Appendix C](#).

Most shared YouTube accounts and videos

To understand the drivers of the narrative on YouTube, an analysis of the top 1,000 YouTube videos was conducted from the sample of selected conspiracy-driven Facebook accounts. Of the 1,000 videos 346 or 34.6% of videos had been removed by Google, leaving 654 videos with live-links for analysis.

The most shared YouTube channels include Australian mainstream news, Australian alternative news and journalists, global news, global alternative YouTubers, and Australian political activists. The two most popular channels include Sky News Australia and alternative news network WeAreChangeMelbourne, which posts interviews, often with international guests and documentaries.

Most shared YouTube channel posts with live-links on Facebook; Includes community sample of conspiracy-driven Facebook group and page accounts; Sample of YouTube posts analysed n = 654 posts; Does not include videos that were removed from YouTube; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

	CHANNEL	NUMBER OF SHARES WITHIN SELECTED ACCOUNTS ▼	VIEWS ON YOUTUBE POSTS	COMMENTS ON YOUTUBE POSTS	LIKES ON YOUTUBE POSTS
1.	Sky News Australia	60	38,593,664	302,380	1,093,617
2.	WeAreChangeMelbourne	57	77,328	1,564	6,241
3.	Rebel News	13	2,138,499	33,810	151,668
4.	Fox News	13	54,824,932	206,318	1,352,054
5.	██████████	11	95,364	1,550	6,294
6.	AwakenWithJP	10	15,177,723	113,288	1,018,304
7.	9 News Australia	7	585,610	0	6,089
8.	██████████	7	3,374,170	40,874	168,239
9.	Jeffrow Productions	5	4,743	74	221
10.	Liabilitymate	5	37,590	404	1,384
11.	TFIGlobal	5	4,590,071	17,277	102,705
12.	██████████	5	1,080,069	12,899	64,249
13.	reallygraceful	4	727,348	10,350	60,908
14.	60 Minutes Australia	4	9,372,924	0	108,394
15.	Serenatopia	4	59,643	1,397	3,663
16.	██████████	4	11,120	382	0
17.	██████████	4	191,100	3,053	6,247
18.	Valuetainment	4	7,088,311	72,614	249,405
19.	Children's Health Defense	4	588,545	2,530	21,256
20.	██████████	4	632,843	16,031	71,733
21.	BlazeTV	4	4,165,010	27,329	168,005
22.	Real Rukshan	4	57,152	796	3,906
23.	██████████	3	7,071	134	563
24.	Hugo Talks	3	287,520	3,770	17,847
25.	ACL – Australian Christia...	3	158,966	2,348	8,626

Fig 35. The numbers shown represent the totals views and interactions from the videos on YouTube and do not represent the views and interactions on the posts within the selected Facebook groups and pages.

The most shared YouTube posts include a call for a global lawful rebellion, explainers on the 'Great Reset', Premier Dan Andrews 'exposed' videos, alternative news network interviews, and protester documentaries. Just under half of the posts are from global accounts of feature global influencers.

Top 20 most shared YouTube posts with live-links by interactions on Facebook; Includes community sample of conspiracy-driven Facebook group and page accounts; Sample of YouTube posts analysed n = 654 posts; Does not include videos that were removed from YouTube; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

CHANNEL	IMAGE	TITLE	SHARES	VIEWS
1. [Redacted]		**Urgent UK & Global Lawful Rebellion Against Treason & Sedition	54	202,039
2. TheRemnantVideo		THE GREAT RESET: Davos & the Plot to Cancel Trump	52	3,153,574
3. [Redacted]		Dan Andrews draconian microchip statement	38	65,766
4. WeAreChangeMelbourne		Wesponized News Mega Show	36	1,175
5. WeAreChangeMelbourne		We Are Change Melbourne, Jeff O'Toole: Protest Speech	34	1,157
6. Rebel News		AUSTRALIA'S SHAME: Melbourne police bodyslam reporter Avi Yemini covering pandemic lockdown protest	33	570,158
7. [Redacted]		Coronavirus & Microchip Patents 1984 - 2020 (World)	32	4,809
8. WeAreChangeMelbourne		We Are Change Talk Show: Matt Lawson	32	1,190
9. Sky News Australia		'The Great Reset': World leaders to harness COVID and pursue 'sinister' climate agenda	31	250,020
10. Peekay Truth 2		Dan Scamdrewns' Lies Exposed	30	93,030
11. Economic Renegade		Australia's Agenda for the 21st Century	29	57,220
12. Straya News		Daniel Andrews SOLD Victoria to China	28	151,964
13. Sky News Australia		'Great Reset' in Davos at the forefront of a 'great deception' in the free world	27	1,679,061
14. TheVedicObserver		WHAT IS YOUR STRAWMAN? THE SLAVERY OF OUR TIME BY BIBI BACCHUS.	27	49,393
15. WeAreChangeMelbourne		Contact Tracing Scam	26	1,033
16. In the Interests of the People		Premier Andrews To Stand Trial At The International Criminal Court?	26	71,356
17. WeAreChangeMelbourne		We Are Change Talk Show: Vanessa Valentine	24	1,162
18. WeAreChangeMelbourne		RUSH HOUR PODCAST	23	1,078
19. BlazeTV		RIDING THE DRAGON: The Bidens' Chinese Secrets (Full Documentary)	23	2,731,332
20. Serenatopia		Serene Responds to Cancellation of Licence	23	20,231

Fig 36. The numbers shown represent the totals views from the videos on YouTube and do not represent the views and interactions on the posts within the selected Facebook groups and pages.

The most engaging YouTube posts were shared by [Redacted] most engaging posts linked to global YouTube channels. Top videos featured interviews with [Redacted]

Most engaging YouTube posts by interactions (likes + comments + shares); Includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit; 1 April 2020 to 19 April 2021

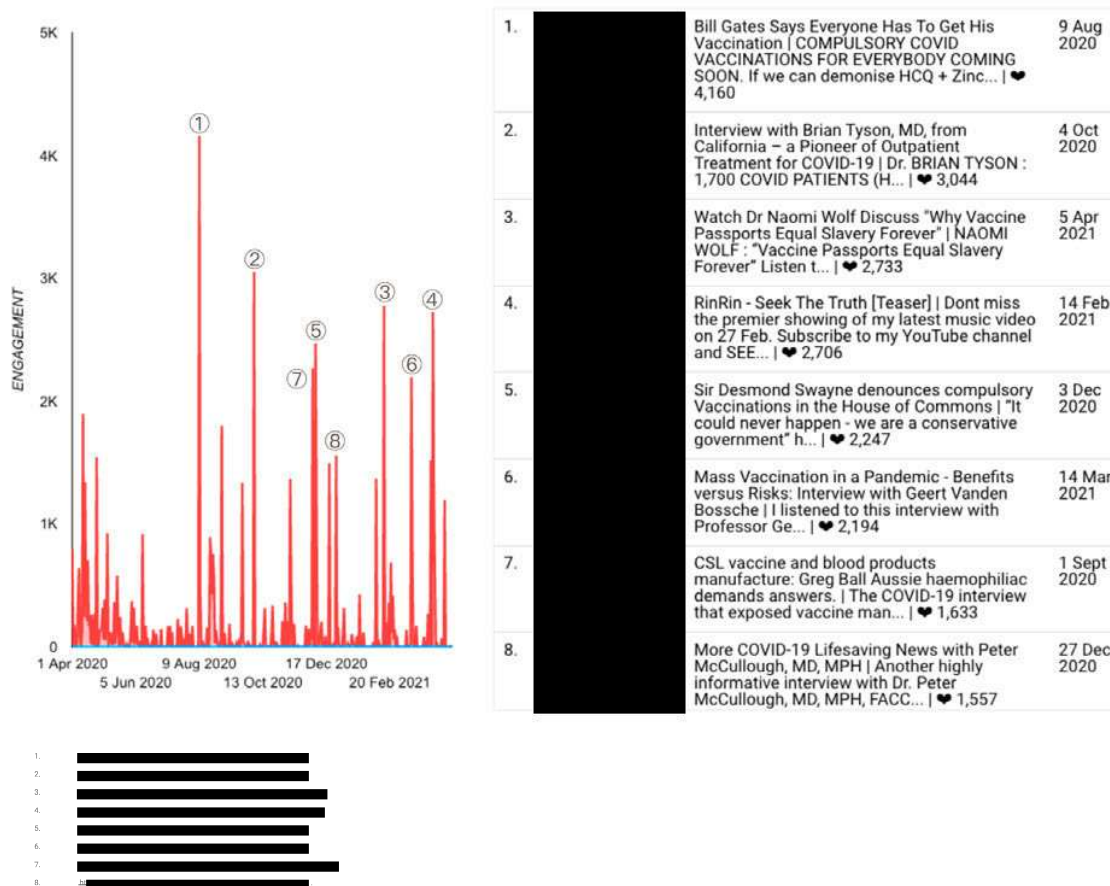


Fig 37. Not all links are accessible due to content removal by the social platforms.

Case study: Anatomy of a YouTube post

A [YouTube video](#) featuring an edited presser of Victorian Premier Dan Andrews discussing health technologies shows a clear path to misinformation on YouTube. The implication of the video is that the COVID-19 vaccine will contain a microchip to monitor citizen’s movements, when Dan Andrews was instead discussing the possibility of using electronic monitoring devices for returned travellers as an alternative to hotel quarantine.

The video was first shared by global conspiratorial communities in Ireland and the UK into Facebook groups and shared on Twitter by a Trump supporter. The video was then shared by a host of Australian Facebook groups, driven in part by one individual who posted the video to 23 Facebook groups. In total, the video received 57 shares on Facebook, 19 tweets and over 65k views.

Timeline of conspiracy-driven viral YouTube post; October 2020 to November 2020

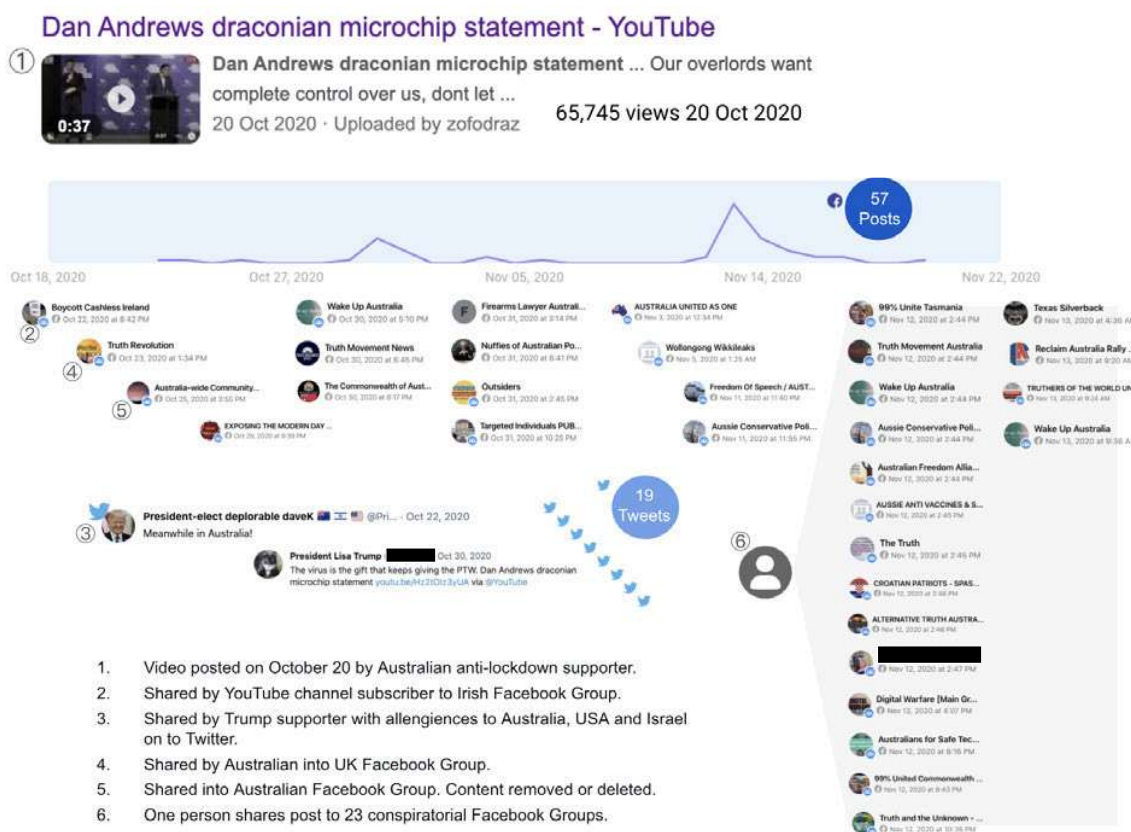


Fig 38. Identified using keyword queries. Crowdtangle data.

Same people, different narratives

Populist conspiracy theories often work by dividing the world into 'Us' vs 'Them', providing over-explanations based on the actions of powerful figures and organisations. In seeking to provide simple explanations of complex events, they tend to disregard the role of chance, and blame these events on malevolence rather than incompetence or indifference.

COVID-19 conspiracy theories have proved to be particularly challenging because they have brought together people with very different concerns. On the one hand, they attract the anti-authoritarian who see issues such as vaccines and 5G as part of an assault by big government on the freedom of individuals. On the other hand, they appeal to the holistic health community, who are often allied with those distrustful of Big pharma and seek out alternative health treatments. On social media, believers of one narrative have a tendency to fall 'down the rabbit hole' and start to follow or believe in all of the popular misinformation narratives. These individuals often use multiple hashtags and themes in the same post including 5G, anti-vaccine, anti-lockdown and QAnon.

Examples of how conspiracy-driven individuals and groups are posting about multiple narratives.

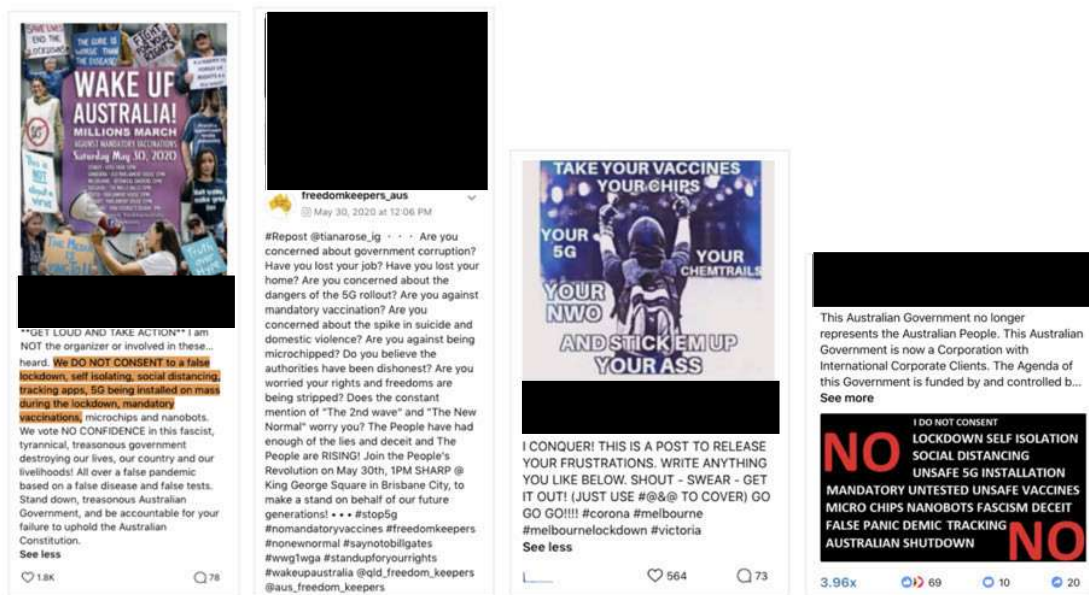


Fig 39. Identified using keyword queries. Crowdtangle data.

The diagram below outlines the narrative overlap within selected conspiracy-driven groups and accounts. 53% of accounts mention more than one narrative. Key overlaps include anti-lockdown and anti-vaccines (16.5%), and anti-lockdown and QAnon (8.8%).

Share of conversation by selected narratives within selected conspiracy-driven groups and accounts; 1 April 2020 to 20 April 2021

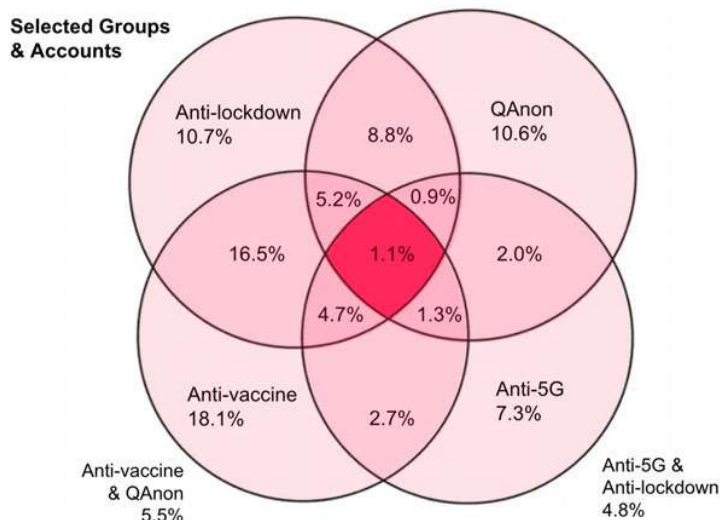


Fig 40. Share of conversation created using keyword queries. Includes 100 Facebook groups, 100 Facebook pages, and 91 Instagram accounts.

The same people, different narratives can be best demonstrated through a user's personal social feed timeline.

Following is a graphical representation of the two key paths to misinformation using the social media feeds of a holistic / health influencer and an anti-authoritarian. Both examples show triggers to conspiratorial thinking, influencers, viral content and the migration to new communities.

The holistic health path to misinformation

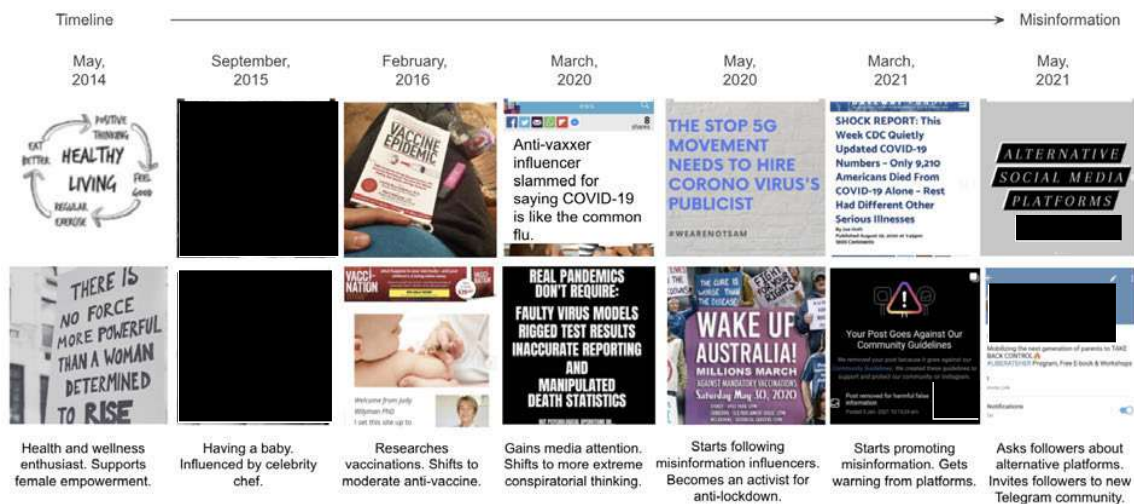


Fig 41. User identified using keyword queries. Pictures selected from users' public Instagram feed. Names and faces have been redacted to protect privacy.

The anti-authoritarian path to misinformation

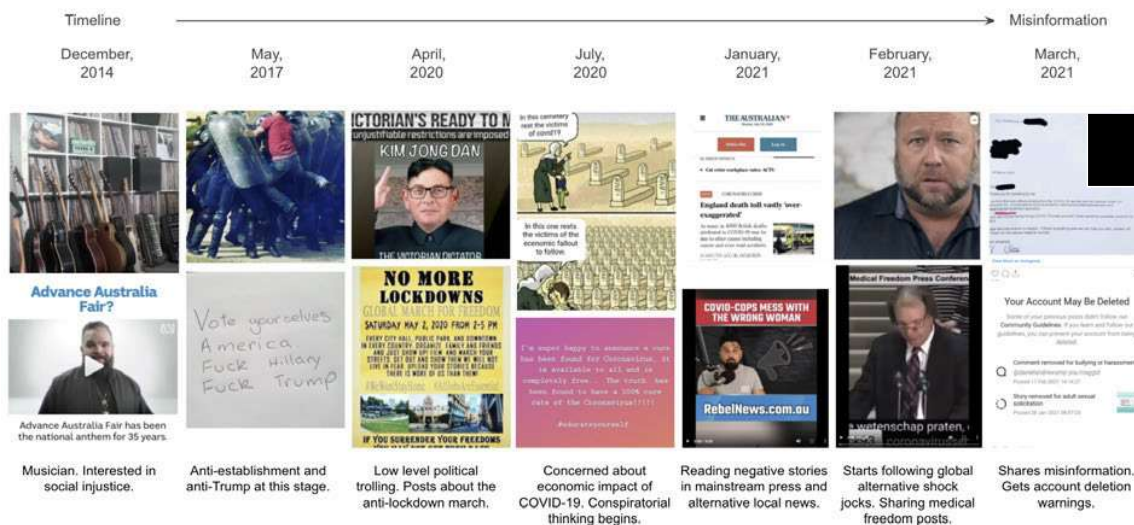


Fig 42. User identified using keyword queries. Pictures selected from users' public Instagram feed. Names and faces have been redacted to protect privacy.

APPENDIX A

Keywords list

Anti-vaccine:

🙄💉, antivax, antivaxer, antivaxer, vaxx, compulsoryvaccination, covid19vaccineexposed, covidvaccine, dontgettested, healthfreedom, investigatebeforeyouvaccinate, medical freedom, nojabyourebarred, nomandatoryvaccines, novaccine, novax, rejectthevaccines, saynotomandatoryvaccines, stoptherollout, v@cc!, v8ccine, vacc ine, vaccin, vaccineagenda, vaccineinjury, vaccinesafetyadvocate, vaccinetruthadvocate, vacks, vackseen, vackseen, vacseen, va((ine, vacx, vakseen, vax push, vaxcine, vaxseen, vaxxed, vaxxtruth

vaccine AND (kills, mental illness, sheeple, bombshell, unfiltered information, uncensored, exposed, criminal, chromosome, dna database, our own dna, effecting the dna, dengvaxia, nanotech, genome, infertility, lying, masses, experimental vaccine, bioweapon, toxic psychosis, medicalgenocidetruth, gene therapy, useless, adenovirus, colluding, poison, masses, thalidomide, catastrophe, medical coup)

5G:

5gdangers, 5gglobalprotestday, 5ghealtheffects, 5gisnotsafe, 5gkills, 5gmindcontrol, 5gmythbuster, 5gmythbustermay, 5gmythbusters, 5gnewearth, 5gproblems, 5gproof, 5gradiation, 5g protest, 5gtowers, anti5g, boycott 5g, boycott ggggg, halt 5g, idonotconsentto5g, no to 5g, no5g, no5gaustralia, no5gforme, removal of all 5g, removal of all 5g, research health effects of 5g, saynoto5g, stop 5g, stop5g, stop5gaustralia, stop5gcentralcoast, stop5gglobal, stop5ginternational, stop5gnorthernrivers, stop5grollout, unsafe 5g, wearenotsam, wearenotsam, wesaynoto5g, wesaynoto5ginaustralia, wesaynoto5g

5g AND (cancer, radiation, unsafe, health risks, kills, mental illness, deaths, sheeple, Safe Technology, damage, danger*, birds, stop the rollout)

Anti-lockdown:

plandemic, scamdemic, casedemic, covid is a scam, covid19fraud, covid1984, coronaisnotreal, coronaphobia, conjob19, censorshipisreal, covidlies, alternativecovidnews, endallockdowns, endlockdown*, endthemelbournelockdown, governmentconspiracy, governmentcontrol, lockdownisaprisonterm, lockdownkills, nomorelockdown, saynotolockdown, stopthelockdown, vicpolwatch, saynototyranny, freedomkeeper, millionsrise, millionsriseaustralia, millionsrisemelbourne, banthemask, burnthemask, facemaskmadness, losethemask, maskfree, maskoff, maskoffforchildren, masksdontwork, masksoff, masktards, nofacemask, mediacorruption, mediamisinformation, millions march

Lockdown AND (democracy, marching, march against, freemelbourne, free melbourne, freevictoria, rally, freedom, march against, vicstapol, police brutality, policebrutality, wakeupaustralia)

QAnon:

#q , qanon*, #qaustralia, aussieq, qaustralia, qdrops, qarmy, thegreatreset, wwg1w*, wgaworldwide, great reset, greatreset, greatawakening, great awakening, agenda21, pizzagate, pedogate, depopulation, exposebillgates, starseeds, voterfraud, trumpwon, godsarmy, lifeforcewatch, wokenwarrio, wqke, weknowthetruth, #weareq, truth seeker, truth teller, truthbetold, truther, truthmedia, truthmovement, truthseeker, truthseekers, truthspeaker, theilluminati, stopbillgates, stopkillingus,

starseeds, #querdenken, #qdrops, #psyop, exposethetruth, cultofbaal, deepstateexposed, childrenshealthdefense, brainwashedsociety, arrestbillgates, alternativewnewsmedia, adrenochrome

APPENDIX B

Lists of most popular conspiracy driven accounts, by total interactions

Facebook groups

Facebook groups Performance - May 2020 to April 2021		Total Interactions	Interaction Rate	Average Posts Per Day	Members
1	The Defenders Of Conservatism	674,174	0.45%	69.1	5,846
2	Where are you walking to on September 5th	357,263	0.66%	18.6	7,910
3	Australian Climate Sceptics Group	351,502	0.96%	18.8	5,638
4	Against Political Correctness	333,128	0.35%	55	5,079
5	Australian Gun Rights	328,985	0.95%	12.2	8,725
6	EXPOSING THE MODERN DAY LEFT 🇺🇸	318,304	0.70%	38.2	3,828
7	Digital Warfare [Main Group]	310,097	0.83%	22.1	4,586
8	Australians for Safe Technology	289,922	0.12%	13.9	48,175
9	Terrain Model Refutes Germ Theory	276,690	0.36%	13.5	15,721
10	STOP THE SALE OF VICTORIA (PUBLIC GROUP)	275,307	0.25%	43.7	6,759
11	Cairns Community Discussion in a Covid World	247,272	0.54%	15.8	8,234
12	United Collective	227,205	0.22%	15.1	18,602
13	End the Lockdown in Australia	227,037	0.57%	25.7	4,197
14	Understand the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia	220,851	0.40%	12.7	12,889
15	Australian Gun Owners.	219,562	0.74%	13.5	7,779
16	Collective Action Network	175,463	0.13%	46.8	7,633
17	Aussie Conservative Political Shenanigans	146,053	0.83%	13.4	3,619
18	The People say NO to 5G!	139,515	1.18%	4.2	7,701
19	Media Manipulation	139,419	0.36%	26.6	3,918
20	WeAreTheNewMedia🇺🇸	130,852	1.26%	4.3	6,507
21	One Nation Supporters NSW	127,083	2.26%	2.4	6,544
22	██████████ Vaccine Discussion Forum	121,064	0.19%	28.6	5,925
23	Constitutional Lawful Restoration from Corrupt Governance	106,712	1.06%	4.2	6,533
24	Australian Freedom Alliance	101,103	0.27%	25.9	3,767
25	Australian Liberty Forum (ALF)	100,305	0.58%	9.4	4,882
26	Man Made Global Warming is a HOAX	92,095	2.99%	6.7	1,430
27	AUSTRALIA UNITED AS ONE	89,641	1.10%	12.6	1,822
28	Australians who Dislike UN	81,472	0.70%	17.6	2,100
29	Humanity vs Insanity - The CRANE Report	73,092	0.03%	39.6	15,388

30	Truckies, Farmers & Veterans of Australia & the World	69,536	1.03%	12.8	1,358
31	Freedom for Humanity Australia New Zealand	68,835	1.39%	2.5	5,319
32	AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE EXPOSED.	68,146	0.27%	16.1	4,341
33	Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Party	66,146	0.69%	7.8	3,357
34	Fair Go For Australians	63,124	0.47%	9.6	3,642
35	wake up Australia	61,959	0.13%	47.6	2,391
36	Stop5G Legal Resistance - Research Stop5G(dot)net	61,667	0.03%	15.3	34,848
37	Farming in Australia for real farmers and supporters.	56,994	0.99%	6.7	2,761
38	Truth Seekers Secrets	52,635	0.08%	26.7	6,047
39	5G - dangers & health problems discussion	52,555	0.04%	22.8	15,479
40	Australia-wide Community Board No Rules	47,008	0.23%	25.5	2,602
41	RESET Parliament (Australia)	40,397	0.41%	11.6	2,200
42	Aussie Lefties United (ALU)	39,997	0.64%	10	1,559
43	SAVE Australia with People Power	37,647	0.55%	9.3	2,225
44	Bring Vaxxed to Australia/New Zealand	37,211	0.05%	16.4	12,003
45	Aussie Yellow Vests	35,651	0.13%	21.2	3,113
46	Repeal 18c	35,361	0.58%	14.6	1,048
47	We Say "NO" To The New World Order-One World Government.	34,678	0.20%	14.9	3,057
48	Unlawful Council Watch Australia, Together We Stand	34,421	0.42%	10.6	1,908
49	Stop The New world order In Australia	33,518	0.33%	13.3	1,819
50	Commonwealth Information Australia	32,831	0.52%	8.1	2,484
51	Australian Sovereign Rights.	32,586	0.44%	8.4	2,301
52	WAKE UP CALL to Agenda 21	32,458	0.19%	17.8	3,387
53	AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION FOR DUMMIES	29,329	0.66%	5.9	2,085
54	FREEDOM DAY - A GOVERNMENT OPERATION?	28,596	1.02%	3.4	2,253
55	Truth and the Unknown - Australia	27,732	0.23%	11.2	2,839
56	Velvet Revolution:United WE STAND	26,596	0.18%	10.5	3,388
57	The Australian Constitution	26,373	0.76%	6.7	1,814
58	Standing under Sovereignty	25,232	0.91%	4.9	1,729
59	Australians have lost their country through inaction.	23,203	0.68%	5.3	2,157
60	The Great Reset World Economic Forum	22,335	0.24%	9.3	2,519
61	99% United Commonwealth of nations.Achieving Peace Through Sovereignty <3	21,414	0.20%	16.7	1,526
62	AUSTRALIA UNCENSORED	20,519	0.49%	27.6	570
63	Northern Rivers for Safe Technology	19,757	0.51%	3	3,523
64	NWO FACEBOOK RESTRICTED NEWS'	18,893	0.19%	11.5	2,462
65	Real Truth Universe	17,067	0.30%	9.1	1,680
66	Freedom Of Speech / AUSTRALIA	15,918	0.48%	9.4	834
67	Australian Yellow Vest Alliance - Victoria	15,326	0.50%	9.5	854
68	Australian Freedom News	15,310	0.15%	8.5	2,879
69	Alternative View Network	15,042	0.43%	10.4	855
70	Understand the UN and NWO and WHO Takeover of Australia	14,390	0.85%	12.9	355
71	Australians Know YOUR RIGHTS	13,991	2.30%	2.1	784

72	LOYAL CONSTITUTIONALISTS.	13,131	0.61%	5	1,201
73	Take Australia Back	12,990	0.03%	9.3	10,985
74	Truth Tellers	12,395	0.43%	11.4	461
75	Free Speech For Aussie Patriots	12,096	2.27%	4	536
76	INDIVISIBLE FAMILY RIGHTS	10,831	0.69%	5.6	721
77	People Opposing and Exposing Corruption - NSW, Australia	9,647	0.30%	3.9	2,187
78	NO WIFI IN SCHOOLS	8,966	0.39%	2.6	2,466
79	Sydney For Safe Technology	8,840	0.58%	2	2,134
80	99% Unite Tasmania	7,798	0.44%	10	453
81	Are You afraid of the Truth	7,677	0.27%	3.7	1,865
82	Wrong Vaccines	7,451	0.09%	5.8	3,421
83	Australian Christian News	5,958	0.92%	2.2	863
84	TRUTHERS OF THE WORLD UNITE	4,995	0.07%	9	1,457
85	Truth Movement Australia	4,395	0.08%	4.9	2,660
86	Australian Conservative Coalition	4,293	1.44%	1.8	404
87	Australians for Safe Technology - Geelong	4,196	2.61%	0.7	680
88	ANARCHY AUSTRALIA	4,170	0.78%	3.1	386
89	The Hard Truth (THT)	4,101		11.8	393
90	Anonymous Queensland	3,983	0.19%	1.6	3,000
91	NBCAN - Northern Beaches Climate Action Network	3,881	1.88%	1.2	426
92	STOP 5G Brisbane	3,756	0.42%	3.1	789
93	The Truth	3,220	0.10%	3.2	2,177
94	Coronavirus Forum for Mullumbimby / Byron Shire	3,198	1.03%	1.3	590
95	Australians for Constitutional Reform and Restoration	3,078	0.83%	1.6	612
96	ALTERNATIVE TRUTH AUSTRALIA	2,864	0.60%	1.5	883
97	Australians against mandatory vaccinations	2,857	0.79%	2	531
98	Safe Technology Noosa	2,828	1.03%	0.7	975
99	Australians for Safe Technology Frankston	2,582	1.57%	1.1	407
100	Southeast Melbourne For Safe Technology	2,400	0.52%	2.7	406

05/01/2020 - 04/30/2021 Go

Page Name	Total Interactions	Interaction Rate	Avg. Posts Per Day	Views on Owned Videos	Page Followers	Growth % and #
Average Total:	456,809.32	1.241%	3.02	2.16M	67,542.70	+0.69%
[Redacted]	4.59M	2.455%	1.42	31.99M	386,815	+15.32% +51,395
Stand Up For Australia- Canberra	2.99M	0.259%	21.5	76,905	146,215	-0.94% -1,391
[Redacted]	2.38M	1.474%	3.59	142,162	129,313	+9.74% +11,478
Australian Liberty Alliance	2.26M	1.554%	2.74	34.75M	203,479	+130.66% +115,262
The Quiet Australian	1.99M	0.887%	9.76	12,533	70,466	+26.65% +14,829

Facebook pages

Facebook pages Performance - May 2020 to April 2021		Total Interactions	Interaction Rate	Average Posts Per Day	Followers
1	[Redacted]	4.59M	2.46%	1.42	386,815
2	Stand Up For Australia- Canberra	2.99M	0.26%	21.5	146,215
3	[Redacted]	2.39M	1.48%	3.59	129,313
4	Australian Liberty Alliance	2.26M	1.55%	2.74	203,479
5	The Quiet Australian	1.99M	0.89%	9.76	70,466
6	[Redacted]	1.96M	2.71%	2.26	93,835
7	[Redacted]	1.93M	2.76%	3.11	66,106
8	Stop Foreign Ownership in Australia	1.89M	0.84%	3.15	197,666
9	[Redacted]	1.86M	0.84%	12.73	49,847
10	[Redacted]	1.53M	0.44%	26.58	36,823
11	Dash Cam Owners Australia	1.41M	0.34%	1.29	927,771
12	[Redacted]	1.36M	1.29%	2.14	145,328
13	Australian Christian Lobby	1.29M	0.65%	2.18	276,799
14	No sharia law - Never ever give up Australia	1.14M	0.29%	9.69	108,516
15	Australians against radical Religions and corrupt politicians	1.09M	1.33%	2.23	102,401
16	Australians vs. The Agenda	958,974	2.41%	3.23	33,742
17	[Redacted]	930,751	4.37%	1.03	62,726
18	NO Greens - Real Conservation, Not Green Lies	845,634	2.11%	2.3	48,193
19	Lock The Gate Alliance	837,657	0.63%	2.62	147,176
20	[Redacted]	836,586	2.35%	0.92	126,109
21	AUSTRALIA-The Land Down-Under	768,684	0.22%	3.98	246,380
22	The Anti Leftist	680,179	2.66%	3.46	24,028
23	Stand Up For Australia- Melbourne	591,943	0.30%	8.35	65,364
24	[Redacted]	501,634	1.08%	0.87	147,447
25	[Redacted]	493,171	0.78%	10.46	16,710
26	[Redacted]	443,916	1.57%	0.88	91,906

27	██████████	396,495	2.30%	1.1	43,393
28	██████████	383,313	2.16%	1.57	31,545
29	The Greens Little Bag of Stupidity	382,095	1.95%	5.32	12,854
30	The Australian Tea Party	341,846	0.12%	6.02	124,569
31	Fair Suck Of The Sav, Mate.	330,465	0.11%	9.89	80,193
32	Take Back Australia	305,521	3.00%	0.39	75,242
33	The Viking Christian	297,214	1.69%	1.67	33,652
34	██████████	265,199	1.72%	5.29	8,823
35	Australians Against Destructive Leftism	263,545	1.35%	1.91	29,615
36	True Biblical Christians	253,189	0.28%	1.27	191,689
37	FamilyVoice Australia	242,322	1.05%	2.27	28,411
38	██████████	232,465	0.51%	0.95	129,970
39	Guardians Of Australia	224,465	0.20%	4.76	63,762
40	Respect Australia Rally - Gold Coast	221,409	0.80%	3.71	20,700
41	██████████	212,755	1.94%	1.81	19,831
42	██████████	209,497	1.06%	3.01	21,347
43	Australian Conservative Libertarian Group	203,358	0.50%	5.87	18,881
44	Informed Medical Options Party - IMOP	194,384	3.45%	1.07	22,078
45	Rite-ON	184,776	0.45%	9.08	12,386
46	Stop The Mosque	165,705	0.38%	3.31	35,165
47	Reclaim Australia Rally - Western Australia	150,840	0.58%	2.68	26,242
48	Royal Australian Infidel	135,841	0.89%	0.3	140,710
49	██████████)	127,247	0.94%	0.15	255,689
50	The Rationalist	121,988	1.03%	2.33	15,146
51	We are Australian	118,930	3.46%	2.62	3,597
52	Agenda 21 Australia/COP 2030/Politics	114,143	0.11%	9.47	30,797
53	Love Australia or Leave Political Party	106,001	1.85%	0.63	24,946
54	Exposing Islam	102,438	1.04%	0.32	82,862
55	██████████	99,993	2.09%	3.03	5,864
56	Culture War Resource	96,778	1.84%	2.02	8,454
57	Respect Australia Rally - Sydney	94,634	0.37%	2.22	31,554
58	Freedom Of Speech Productions USA	93,029	0.55%	1.94	23,493
59	Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party	91,478	0.29%	0.87	98,239
60	██████████	89,624	0.12%	2.88	67,030
61	She ain't right	86,753	0.34%	1.33	52,116
62	Firearm Owners United	81,835	0.21%	1.74	62,545
63	Boycott Halal Certification in Australia	81,590	1.41%	0.19	83,975
64	██████████	81,287	1.13%	0.46	43,609
65	Drain the Swamp Australia	72,474	0.35%	6.54	8,813
66	Snap Out Of It Australia	65,478	1.16%	2.06	7,390
67	The Voice of Australia	62,985	0.30%	1.35	42,186
68	Rise Up Australia	60,545	0.71%	1.13	22,717

69	Aussie Bogans	58,986	0.51%	0.35	91,413
70	Australia in the Great War	56,569	0.21%	0.64	112,162
71	Infidel Brotherhood Speak Without Fear	55,707	0.60%	8.24	3,116
72	Australian National Review	47,383	1.33%	3.8	5,057
73	Keep the United Nations out of Sovereign Nations	44,740	0.32%	3.52	10,298
74	Save Australia - Vote Conservative	44,496	1.53%	1.85	4,436
75	Aussie FO Memes	43,496	0.98%	0.38	32,014
76	ST. George - Australian anti islamification	42,045	1.60%	3.49	2,079
77	Red Hot Charity Fraud	39,031	9.35%	1.04	1,864
78	All Things Bogan	37,138	0.22%	0.36	135,006
79	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2.71%	1.02	3,330
80	The Unshackled	31,589	0.48%	0.74	23,681
81	ClRnow-australia	26,476	0.57%	2.31	5,756
82	[REDACTED]	24,986	2.56%	2.23	1,173
83	[REDACTED]	21,601	0.90%	0.34	19,498
84	Tribulation Earth	20,352	0.50%	2.35	4,726
85	Boycott Halal in Australia	16,498	0.50%	0.09	102,944
86	Election WON - Governing NOW	16,493	1.44%	0.37	8,434
87	Hey Feminist "What Are You Gonna Do About It"	11,886	1.69%	0.8	2,325
88	What Will We Leave Our Children?	10,866	0.59%	1.31	3,749
89	WeAreNotSAM	9,367	3.06%	0.25	4,178
90	Rite-ON Take 2	8,678	1.38%	2.33	798
91	United Australia Party	6,874	0.19%	0.18	54,312
92	Lovers of Australia. Haters of Islam.	6,839	0.72%	1.2	2,099
93	Freedom Don't Come Free & Devildoc I	5,931	0.52%	0.32	9,636
94	Vaccine Injury Awareness Month Australia	3,986	0.75%	0.44	3,455
95	Convoy Liberation	3,311	4.03%	0.21	1,068
96	[REDACTED]	2,768	1.16%	0.53	1,257
97	Stop 5G Global	1,361	0.35%	0.37	3,099
98	The Deplorables - Australia	1,298	1.05%	0.13	3,132
99	Organicfamily Community & Co-op	885	0.03%	1.28	3,806
100	DH Natural Medicine Clinic	247	121	1.25	1,128

Instagram accounts

Instagram Leaderboard Performance - May 2020 to April 2021		Total Interactions	Interaction Rate	Average Posts Per Day	Followers
1	[REDACTED]	1.39M	3.45%	1.98	67,820
2	[REDACTED]	1.17M	1.96%	6.4	26,063
3	[REDACTED]	1.07M	1.32%	10.8	21,061
4	[REDACTED]	385,820	2.19%	7.03	6,997
5	thenewearth	324,578	1.17%	0.69	114,762
6	unitylinkofficial	279,375	0.84%	14.08	6,559

7	reignitedemocracyaustralia	254,575	3.71%	1.5	12,820
8	australiansvstheagenda	253,003	0.94%	3.33	22,552
9	██████████	232,685	3.35%	4.85	3,995
10	friendsoftruth	208,452	2.35%	1.72	14,466
11	avn.org.au	196,340	4.42%	1.74	11,863
12	██████████	177,181	4.18%	1.23	9,649
13	londonreal_army	124,540	1.66%	3.1	6,747
14	██████████	123,110	3.66%	2.19	4,295
15	██████████	111,368	4.49%	0.42	16,542
16	xrebellionaus	104,639	1.88%	0.64	24,530
17	healthfreedomcoalition	104,094	0.29%	1.2	79,304
18	hey.everyone2020	102,514	104,042	4.36	
19	citizenocrone	88,723	1.33%	9.64	1,877
20	thought_crimes_aus	79,695	4.64%	0.82	5,858
21	██████████	72,420	4.68%	1.26	3,422
22	organic_collective	65,154	1.20%	6.33	2,329
23	deepstate_shills	61,338	3.91%	1.62	2,709
24	collectionoffirst	59,306	1.04%	9.81	1,538
25	nsw_freedom_keepers	53,968	6.23%	0.52	8,911
26	nate_max_tv	53,095	0.93%	0.98	17,738
27	youssra_yat	49,997	3.31%	1.34	3,142
28	██████████	46,158	0.32%	4.01	10,617
29	██████████	41,903	0.51%	1.42	16,125
30	wearenotsam	39,994	3.77%	0.3	15,039
31	the_roadwarrior001	36,022	2.08%	1.85	2,597
32	thepantonstore	34,678	0.65%	1.15	13,895
33	██████████	34,110	7.11%	0.47	2,826
34	██████████	33,283	3.25%	0.99	3,108
35	covidmemes_	32,806	1.73%	5.51	927
36	██████████	32,376	35,954	3.62	
37	██████████	31,971	0.29%	1.66	18,842
38	melbournetinfolhats	28,021	4.09%	1.25	1,517
39	██████████	26,325	89,704	0.39	
40	aussie_anon3	25,535	13,016	1.15	
41	makinginformedchoices2	24,918	3.97%	0.47	3,727
42	freedomkeepers_aus	24,001	3.63%	0.26	10,701
43	██████████	21,866	101,203	1	
44	covidscam	21,767	3.15%	0.53	3,653
45	new_not_normal_2021	21,456	2.85%	1.5	1,405
46	kirriwoodfitnessandtruth	18,194	0.69%	0.74	9,639
47	wearechange_melbourne	17,720	22,029	1.46	
48	no5gaustralia	16,356	2.48%	0.31	6,466

49	officialplandemic	16,088	4.26%	0.08	13,953
50	millionsriseaustralia	14,969	2.80%	0.52	2,897
51	_naturally_green	14,956	2.61%	1.13	1,417
52	truth_beauty_freedom_love_	14,851	47,295	1.87	
53	healthaustraliaparty	13,726	3.50%	0.28	3,943
54	forgivingtruth	13,586	4.82%	0.74	1,059
55	standupxworld	12,509	1.70%	3.01	649
56	vic_freedom_keepers	9,929	6.37%	0.19	3,888
57	████████	9,421	8.17%	0.12	2,680
58	██████████	8,633	4.40%	1	546
59	theplandemic	8,616	1.95%	1.73	666
60	████████	6,658	2.01%	1.01	895
61	infectedbloodau	6,473	3.75%	0.4	1,200
62	scamdemic	5,942	4.56%	0.36	1,008
63	████████	5,172	8,090	0.26	
64	the_peoples_press	5,075	37,968	0.48	
65	████████	4,900	1.78%	0.85	899
66	awakenedsoulsees	4,869	0.04%	1.44	21,438
67	earthtruthseeker	4,107	1.46%	3.33	205
68	covid1984__	3,980	6,364	0.7	
69	redpill.aus	3,937	3.50%	1.07	286
70	im_not_a_lab_rat	3,845	1,685	0.31	
71	plan_demic	3,619	2,218	1.25	
72	riseandshine_17	3,600	1.82%	2.24	220
73	society_revolution_	3,444	191	0.48	
74	australia_v2.0	3,349	0.59%	0.96	1,521
75	_truthhunter_aus	3,277	9,048	0.38	
76	stop5gaustralia	1,722	3.05%	0.15	985
77	official_wakeupaustralia	1,717	5,494	0.43	
78	dragonfly_effect02	1,555	2,017	0.43	
79	the_resistance_australia	1,516		0.14	
80	australian_civilian_soldier	1,484		0.19	
81	coastiesforsafetech	1,481	1.82%	0.26	832
82	covid1984__	1,095	3.03%	0.1	1,056
83	make_it_make_sense	1,079	0.04%	2.27	2,393
84	theresistanceaustralia	1,037	2,901	0.16	
85	organic_collective_v2	1,010		0.28	
86	ttwsyf2020	968	1,437	0.11	
87	pissyleaks	844	2,262	1.01	
88	thebulletpointblank	749	30	0.1	
89	papabears_garden	402	1,102	0.16	
90	australiangovernmentisfake	363		0.02	

91		246	5.21%	0.01	1,171
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APPENDIX C

Facebook page links and assigned categories

Data was collected over a 6 month period, October 2020 to April 2021, due to

Where the country of origin was unknown, Similarweb analytics was used to identify the country of ownership. For the sites that did not register on Similarweb, websites were classified after manually scanning the site content.

Source	Country	Segment
youtube	USA	Video
skynews.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
abc.net.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
theaustralian.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
rebelnews (website & Facebook)	Global (YouTube)	Alternative News
politicsonline.net	USA	Alternative News
dailymail.co.uk	USA	Mainstream News Site
bitchute.com	USA	Alternative Video
personalinterpretation.com	USA	Alternative News
news.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
	Australia	
reignitedemocracyaustralia	Australia	Alternative FB Group
	Australia	Alternative Blog
heraldsun.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
dailytelegraph.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
	Australia	Alternative Blog
smh.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
caldronpool.com	USA	Alternative News
rumble.com	Israel	Alternative News
7news.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
theguardian.com	Australia	Mainstream News Site
	Australia	Alternative FB Group
advanceaustralia.org.au	Australia	Alternative Activism
sbs.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
	Israel	Alternative FB Page
	Australia	
thepolitics.online	USA	Alternative News
spectator.com.au	Australia	Alternative News
	Australia	Alternative FB Page

couriermail.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
dailymail aus	Australia	Mainstream News Site
████████████████████	Australia	████████
████████████████████	Israel	Alternative News Journalist
free-speechfront.info	USA	Alternative News
2gb.com	Australia	Radio
msn.com	Australia	Mainstream News Site
████████████████████	Australia	████████
9news.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
cairnsnews.org	Australia	Mainstream News Site
*speech-point.com	USA	Alternative News
*freespeechfront.net	Israel	Alternative News
*theage.com.au	Australia	Mainstream News Site
*odysee.com	Canada	Alternative Video
*break.ma (b news social network)	USA	Social Network
*twitter.com	Australia	Social Network
*breitbart.com	Australia	Alternative News
*jihadwatch.org	UK	Alternative News
*nexusnewsfeed.com	France	Alternative News
*aph.gov.au	Australia	Government
*acl.org.au	Australia	Other

*In the chart 'Top 50 Facebook link sources' these accounts are combined as 'Other'