

# OPP: GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL POLICY, & COMMUNICATION

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## Connection to the world – Older Afro-Brazilian quilombolas and their information and communication technologies

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**Purpose** The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has increased significantly in recent years. Thus, in today's world, social participation, whether in consumption, in governance, in access to information, or in social contacts, is strongly linked to the possibility of using ICTs and can represent a factor of social exclusion. In Brazil, internet access has increased, but excluded groups remain. Illiterate people remain scarcely present, despite having increased their participation on the internet from 20.7% in 2019 to 42.6% in 2023. Only 38.2% of older people accessed the internet in 2019, which increased to 57.5%. Despite progress, more than 40% of people over 60 do not access the internet. Considerable progress can be seen in rural areas, where in 2019, only 61.1% accessed the internet, in 2023 there are already 83.3%, only slightly less than in urban areas with 89.7% in 2023. In relation to race, the differences were not strong and an increase was noted in each ethnic group, in white people from 79.9% to 89.4% between 2019 and 2023, in black people from 76.8% to 87.7% (all data from the Regional Center of Studies for the Development of the Information Society – CETIC, accessible at <https://cetic.br>). With these changes, arises the question, how this is concretely reflected for older people in a traditional quilombola community, a community formed by descendants of enslaved Afro-Brazilian people and generally living in poor health and social conditions (Costa et al., 2021). What are the means of communication used by older members of this community and what are the consequences of the use of ICTs for this population. **Method** The research was carried out in the quilombola community of Palmas, Bagé-RS, Brazil, a rural area, between June 2023 and March 2024. Visits and interviews were carried out in the localities of Rincão da Pedreira, Rincão do Inferno and Rincão dos Alves with 17 participants, men and women, aged between 61 and 85 years, with up to six years of schooling. The interview consisted of 30 open and closed questions addressing sociodemographic data (16), financial education (10) and possibilities for digital inclusion (4). **Results and Discussion** In the interviews, two means of communication appeared, cell phones and community radio. Of the 17 people, 15 have their own cell phone, two share their cell phone with their children. However, in many cases, the connection is limited. For the participants, the cell phone plays a central role as a communication tool in a community with large distances between houses, keeping them updated on events both inside and outside the quilombo. A more complicated aspect is that they frequently receive commercial proposals through phone calls and messaging applications, mainly to convince them to take out a payroll loan, a form of credit deducted directly from retirement and which is seen as one of the main causes of debt of older people in Brazil (Doll & Cavallazzi, 2017). The other medium, community radio, is listened to by all participants. The results show that the cell phone has already entered even remote places and point to the cell phone's potential as a facilitator of digital inclusion among quilombola older people, but it also shows the dangers of this communication channel as it offers possibilities for unwanted and invasive advertising, or even scams. In this situation, community radio, listened to by 100% of the older members interviewed, which is controlled and carried out by the own community, could offer a channel for conscious consumption education.

### References

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