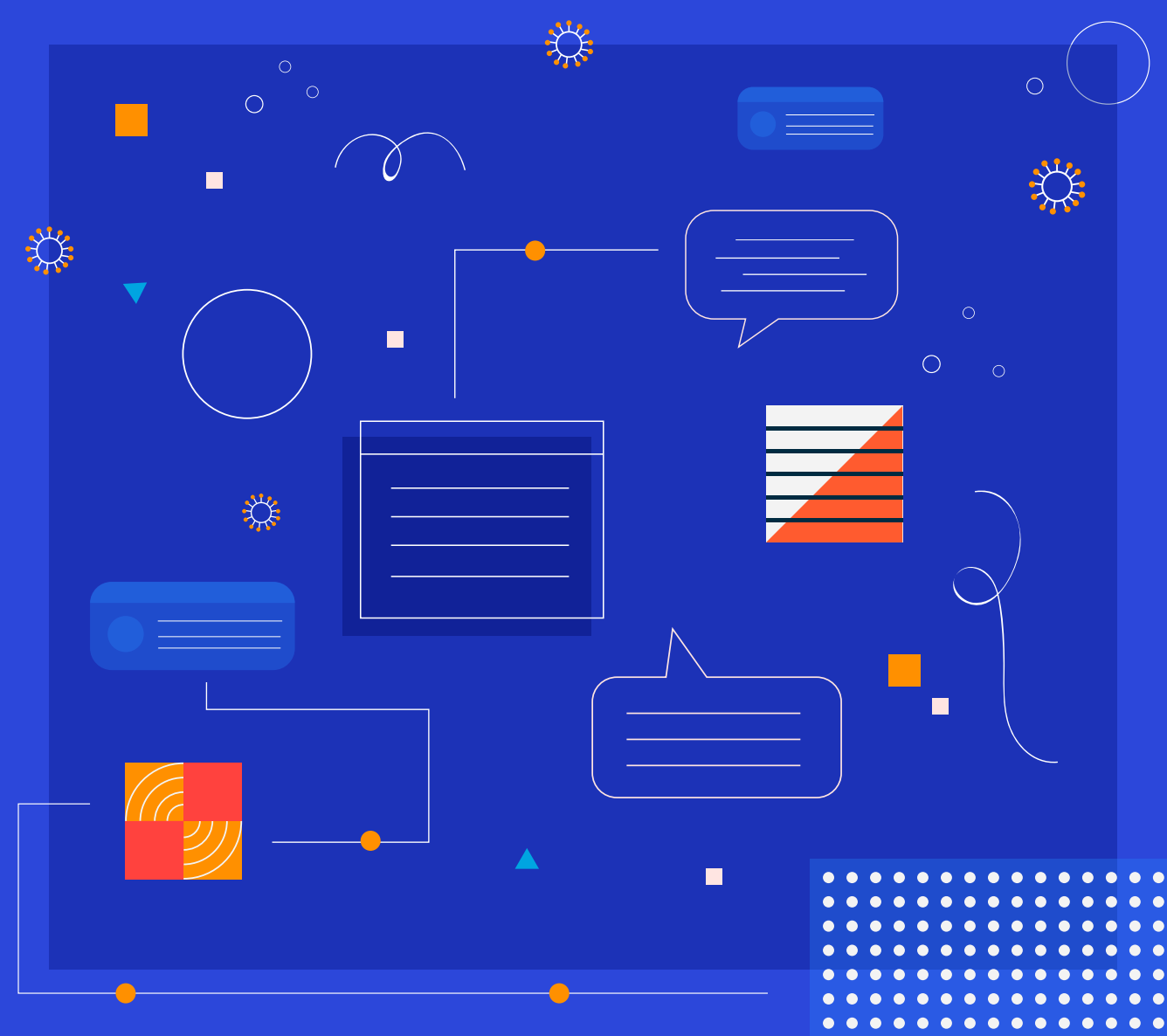




# Hello

▶ **Boletim Humanitário de Rumores**

#1 | FEBRUARY 2022



If you have questions, suggestions or information you'd like to share, please contact us: **Isadora**

**Starling** (istarling@internews.org), Project Manager, or **Samilly Valadares** (svaladaresses@internews.org), Community Engagement and Accountability Officer.

LEARN MORE: [www.INTERNEWS.org](http://www.INTERNEWS.org)



## THE ROOTED IN TRUST

Rooted in Trust (RiT), facilitated by Internews, seeks to respond to the 'infodemic' (misinformation, fake news, rumors and excess information, particularly in relation to COVID-19) that deepens discrimination and affects access to basic community services and assistance in vulnerable communities. Brazil was included in the second edition of the global program, that is also implemented in Colombia, Lebanon, Iraq, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe.

In Brazil, RiT 2.0 is aimed especially at the indigenous and quilombola populations of the states of Amapá, Roraima and Pará, in the North region, where our partners Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (Iepé) and Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB) are already developing reference projects in several areas. The project intends to strengthen information ecosystems, carry out activities of approximation, listening and engagement of communities in the themes of rumors, COVID-19 and vaccination.

## PARTNERS:



**Indigenous Research and  
and Indigenous Education**

**International Institute  
of Education of Brazil**



## ABOUT THIS BULLETIN:

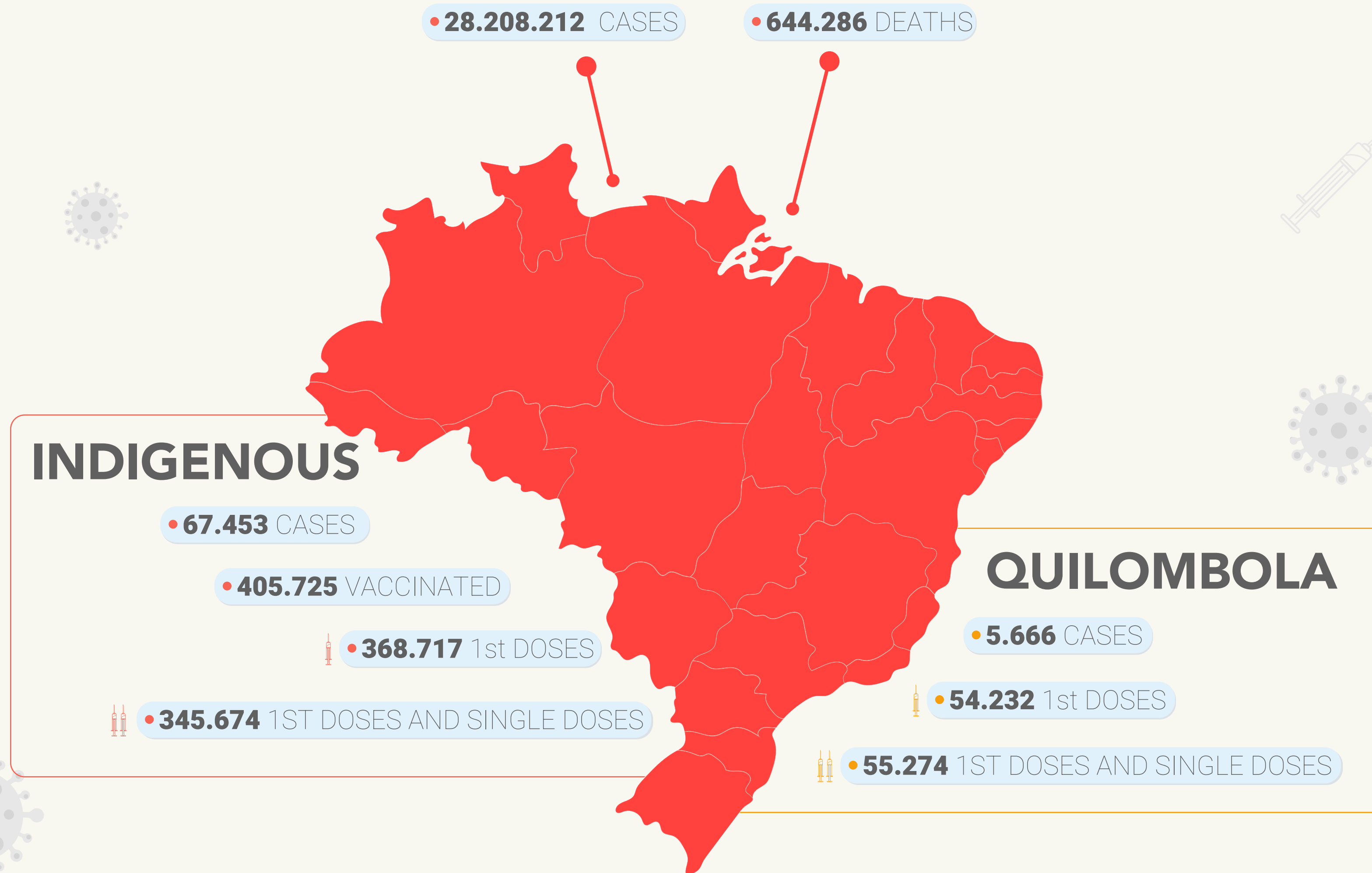
This bulletin aims to update humanitarian and health partners with data about rumours identified among Indigenous communities in the states of Amapá, Pará and Roraima and Quilombola communities in the states of Pará and Amapá in the last month. Our main objective is to provide information regarding risk communication and community engagement efforts in the response to the COVID-19 crisis.

This edition presents a rumor that circulated in twitter in the state of Pará, and that was ranked as medium risk. In the next pages, we will share the content of the rumour content and an analysis of its impact in the region.

## RUMORS: MAIN SUBJECT AND SUBTHEMES



# COVID-19 CONTEXT IN BRAZIL



**SOURCES:**

Ministry of Health (17 and 02/20/2022) | Indigenous Emergency - APIB (02/21/2022) | Quilombo without Covid-19 (01/12/2022)

# RUMOR

## VACCINATING CHILDREN AGAINST COVID-19



...it is strange that famous artists, socialist politicians and medical colleagues in medical societies societies who supported the experimental sting on 5 to 11 year-olds are still not posting photos of their children being vaccinated on social networks. I saw few.



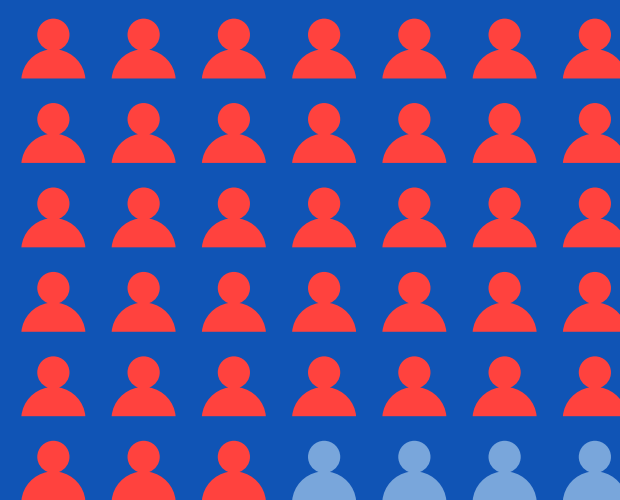
TWITTER - GEOLOCATED IN PARÁ, 01/23/22  
MEDIUM RISK - SUBTHEME: TARGET POPULATION

## WHAT IS BEHIND THE RUMOR?

Brazil is taking three times longer than neighbor countries like Argentina and Uruguay to vaccinate their children, despite the national vaccination program's ability to administer up to 2.4 million doses per day. In addition to the lack of doses, there were obstacles on the part of the federal government, such as the delay in accepting the note from the National Health Surveillance Agency authorizing vaccination and encouraging local authorities to ask for prescriptions or require parents to sign terms of responsibility to vaccinate their children. Also, the government participated in the dissemination of false information, with the education minister himself misattributing deaths to vaccination, public statements by the president, ministers and influential pastors against childhood vaccination, in the name of freedom or to

prevent alleged infanticide, making target communities particularly prone to losing children to COVID-19, especially the Indigenous population. While states like São Paulo exceed 86.5% of the vaccinated population, vaccination rates in the northern states where we are working are still around 57% — Roraima with 57.6% and Amapá, 57.43%. The beginning of the school year, together with pressure from parents to find out if they can vaccinate their children in time for the return to school, comes in parallel with an increase in false information about vaccines as causing stroke and sudden death, in addition to groups that associate not vaccinating children to the freedom of their parents and defending their withdrawal from public schools if they start to require vaccination certifications.

### VACCINATION SÃO PAULO



86,5% OF THE POPULATION

### VACCINATION RORAIMA



57,6% OF THE POPULATION

### VACCINATION AMAPÁ



57,43% OF THE POPULATION



- Childhood vaccination against COVID-19 has been mobilizing debates on social media. Many rumors about vaccines circulate in WhatsApp and Telegram groups and contribute to vaccine hesitancy seen in the target states.

- Some parents still refuse to vaccinate their children, and since vaccination may be a requirement for school enrollment this year, parents are increasingly considering homeschooling as an alternative.

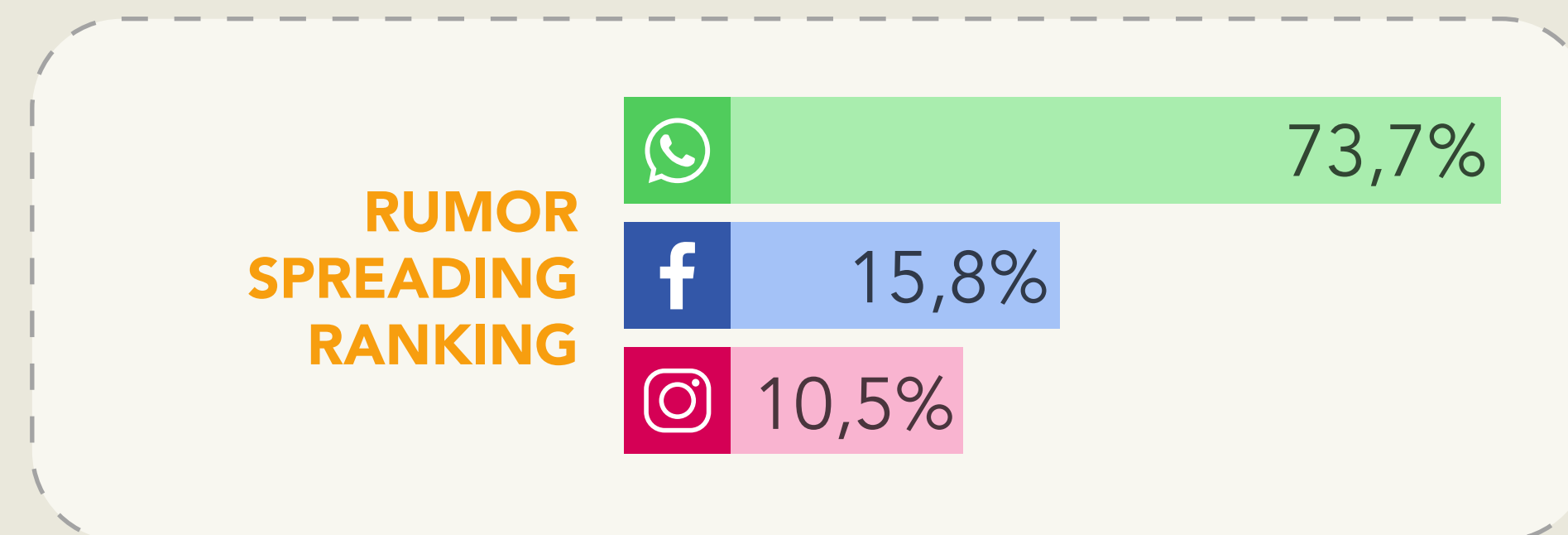
- This debate appears in discussion groups where people believe rumors that vaccines for children are experimental and that pro-vaccine politicians are not vaccinating their own children. In addition to health impacts, rumors circulating on social media can impact education, directly affecting access to basic rights.

- Due to the beginning of the school year in public schools in affected communities, people refusing to get vaccinated and refusing to vaccinate their children are increasingly discussing the latter. It is a really sensitive topic, stirred by videos circulating on online social networks, showing President Bolsonaro saying that he would not vaccinate his daughter and neopentecostal ministers stating that it can cause strokes and that mass child vaccination can lead to infanticide.

- The rumors have, more and more, an association between vaccine and sensitive themes to the religious public, such as "mark of the beast", alleged use of "aborted fetuses" in vaccine development, theories that politicians and artists supporting the vaccination do not vaccinate their own children and use others as guinea pigs, etc. Based on religious approaches, people seek their own spaces to discuss and define strategies to avoid vaccination, which include taking their children out of schools and educating them at home in case vaccination is mandatory. Prior to the pandemic, education at home was already defended by some religious groups who prefer that their children learn things such as the creationist theory, clear definition of roles for men and women and theories compatible with their reading of the Bible in their homes. Religious conservatives are one of Bolsonaro's strongest political base.

# FACT CHECKING

- The National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA) guarantees the safety and effectiveness of vaccines against COVID-19 for children.
- Comirnaty (Pfizer/Wyeth), Coronavac (Butantan) are the two vaccines approved by ANVISA for childhood vaccination.
- Posts with misleading information about vaccination against COVID-19 for children have reached 618,000 interactions on Facebook since the Pfizer vaccine was authorized in Brazil for ages 5 to 11, according to Agência de Notícias aos Factos. (Source: "Aos Fatos").
- WhatsApp is the main network used to spread fake news about COVID-19, according to a FioCruz study.



## WHY IS THIS RUMOUR IMPORTANT?

- Rumors spread on social media about childhood vaccination against COVID-19 influence some parents not to vaccinate their children. This has consequences for the realization of the right to vaccination and for the care and prevention of COVID-19.
- Rumors and misinformation around childhood vaccination impact children's access to school. The decision to make vaccination mandatory for the return to in-person classes makes many parents consider home education as an option. The idea that children of famous or influential people are not getting vaccinated can affect groups of people who, in the midst of other contexts of disinformation, feel coerced or forced to get vaccinated and to vaccinate their children.
- The debate around the establishment of this requirement in Brazil is very delicate, since many children and adolescents in vulnerable situations rely on the school as a safe space, which often guarantees their only meal of the day. Therefore, rumors that discourage parents and guardians from sending their children to school can have a severe impact on children's physical and mental health, in the short, medium and long term. On the other hand, it is necessary to reinforce that the return to classes in person without a wide vaccination coverage can also represent a great risk. All these issues reinforce the urgency of vaccinating, above all, children in situations of vulnerability and who could be considered priority groups.

## MOBILIZATION & POSSIBLE ACTIONS

*In addition to analyzing rumors, Internews considers it relevant to reflect on possible actions in response to the "infodemic". Here we suggest some potential responses, such as:*



Humanitarian organizations and other actors that target children and adolescents can witness a mass dropout of school, significantly impacting the efforts made to guarantee wider access to formal education. Therefore, in addition to vaccination and its importance, **advocacy campaigns aimed at the need for school spaces** and promoting their role in the childhood development can be allies to curb decisions that harm this access.



As some reference organizations and local newspapers already do, we encourage production of communication materials with testimonials from children who have already been vaccinated against COVID-19 and promoting the prevention of the disease – this kind of initiative can work very positively. It is valuable **to engage children and adolescents from indigenous, quilombola and riverside communities** in the creation, production and dissemination of this content. Parents, family members and caregivers who view this content can represent a chance to question the rumors heard on the subject. Additionally, children and adolescents from the target communities would have a good space for representation, an important opportunity for their participation and communication.



Organizations and humanitarian agents that work with health may find it difficult to expand actions such as vaccination campaigns and health promotion. It is important to continue, strengthen or even create **spaces for listening with parents, caregivers and the children themselves**, to understand, from a community-based perspective, the concerns, fears and doubts of the target population. This approach would be particularly effective to avoid an overflow of these preoccupations and of disinformation itself into other essential efforts that are being made to support child vaccination.



The strengthening of these community and listening spaces would bring a **broader and clearer understanding of the needs of families** regarding the issue of vaccination against COVID-19, thus allowing a more personalized and culturally adapted reading to, finally, **answer questions and aspirations of the population in a non-impositional and horizontal way.**