

13 November 2025

Asymmetry Indicators at local and interregional level
Accessibility to facilities and services of general interest

ACCESSIBILITY TO FACILITIES AND SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST

In 2023, in Portugal, the median time to reach the nearest **museum by light car** was 9.5 minutes, and in approximately half of the country's municipalities (144 municipalities), this time was 10 minutes or less.

In the 2023/2024 academic year, the median access time by light car for the resident population aged 18 to 22 to reach the nearest **tertiary educational institution** was 12.4 minutes in Portugal. Lisboa and Porto recorded the lowest median access times (3.1 minutes), while eight municipalities presented values above one hour.

In 2023, considering the use of a light car, the median access time for the resident population to reach the nearest **fire brigade** was 6.7 minutes at the national level. Except for the Beira Baixa sub-region (11.7 minutes), all other NUTS 3 presented median access times below 10 minutes, with the lowest time in Grande Lisboa (4.9 minutes).

In 2022, in Portugal, the median access time by light car for the resident population to get to the nearest **hospital institution with childbirth services** was 14.4 minutes. Península de Setúbal was the sub-region with the lowest difference between municipalities in the median access time to hospital institutions with childbirth services (13.1 minutes). Baixo Alentejo, Douro, and Terras de Trás-os-Montes (66.3 minutes) presented the greatest disparities in access times between municipalities, exceeding one hour.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Building on information provided in the [Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest](#) (CE-SIG), this press release focuses on analysing accessibility to facilities and services of general interest by interpreting the time distances (access times) that the population must travel to reach these facilities and services.

The Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest is an application developed by Statistics Portugal, based on a WebGIS platform, which provides information on the characterisation of facilities and the services provided, as well as on the geographies of accessibility and demand for facility/services, namely service areas (based on physical distances and walking and driving times) and two types of catchment areas (potential and effective) and their associated metrics (see Technical Note available in the application).

In the CE-SIG application, information is provided for four sectoral domains: **Culture**, covering museums for the year 2023; **Education**, encompassing tertiary educational institutions in the 2023/2024 academic year; **Civil protection**, including fire brigades for the year 2023; and **Health**, comprising hospital institutions in 2022.

In this press release, the analysis focused on time distances by light car for the four sectoral domains mentioned above. However, it should be noted that the access times by light car presented do not consider, among other factors, the effects of congestion inherent to road traffic. This may result in an underestimation of the actual access times, especially in urban and metropolitan areas, and therefore the values presented should be interpreted as lower bounds of the effective access times.

In the results presented, the median (the value that divides the ordered set of the population's access time to a given facility and service into two equal parts) is privileged as the reference statistic for interpreting the diversity of population accessibility across different territories. Additionally, the values of the 1st and 3rd quartiles (corresponding to the positions of the first and third quarters of the ordered dataset) are also presented, allowing an interpretation of the disparities in access times to facilities and services within each territorial unit.

The results are presented on the Statistics Portugal Portal, in [StatsLab – Statistics in Development](#).

The statistics presented on accessibility to facilities and services of general interest are part of the [IAssLocal – Asymmetry Indicators at local and interregional level](#) project at Statistics Portugal to provide new indicators to characterise the socio-economic diversity of the territories, taking advantage of the potential of the information associated with the **IND** – National Data Infrastructure developed by Statistics Portugal.

CULTURE - MUSEUMS

In 2023, the median access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest museum was 9.5 minutes in Portugal. At the sub-regional level, this value ranged from 7.1 minutes in Grande Lisboa to 24.9 minutes in Alentejo Litoral.

In about half of the municipalities of the country (144 out of 307 municipalities with available information), the resident population could access the nearest museum in 10 minutes or less using a light car. Within this group, 28 municipalities stood out with a median access time of less than 5 minutes: 13 municipalities in the Alentejo region (Barrancos, Cuba, Alter do Chão, Arronches, Redondo, Fronteira, Castro Verde, Sines, Vila Viçosa, Aljustrel, Elvas, Évora, and Vidigueira), five in Oeste e Vale do Tejo (Golegã, Entroncamento, Alpiarça, Vila Nova da Barquinha, and Peniche), three in the Região Autónoma dos Açores (Lagoa, Santa Cruz das Flores, and Vila Franca do Campo), two in the Norte (Freixo de Espada à Cinta and São João da Madeira), as well as the municipalities of Lousã (Centro region), Lisboa (Grande Lisboa), Alcochete (Península de Setúbal), São Brás de Alportel (Algarve), and Machico (Região Autónoma da Madeira).

With higher median access times, above 30 minutes, a group of municipalities stood out, mainly from the interior of the Norte region, Alentejo Litoral, and the Região Autónoma dos Açores. In 2023, the municipality of Odemira recorded the highest median access time (44.1 minutes).

Alto Minho (7.6 minutes) and Grande Lisboa (8.8 minutes) were the NUTS 3 sub-regions with the lowest differences between municipalities in the access time to the nearest museum, both below 10 minutes. Alentejo Litoral recorded the greatest intermunicipal disparity in access times to the nearest museum: 41.0 minutes.

Figure 1

MEDIAN ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION TO THE NEAREST MUSEUM (MINUTES), PORTUGAL, NUTS 3 AND MUNICIPALITY, 2023



Note: For the municipality of Corvo, no data are presented for this indicator due to the absence of museums accessible by light car.

In 2023, in Portugal, the 25% of the resident population with the shortest access time by light car to the nearest museum took up to 5.6 minutes (1st quartile). In contrast, the 25% of the population with the longest access time reached 14.8 minutes or more (3rd quartile).

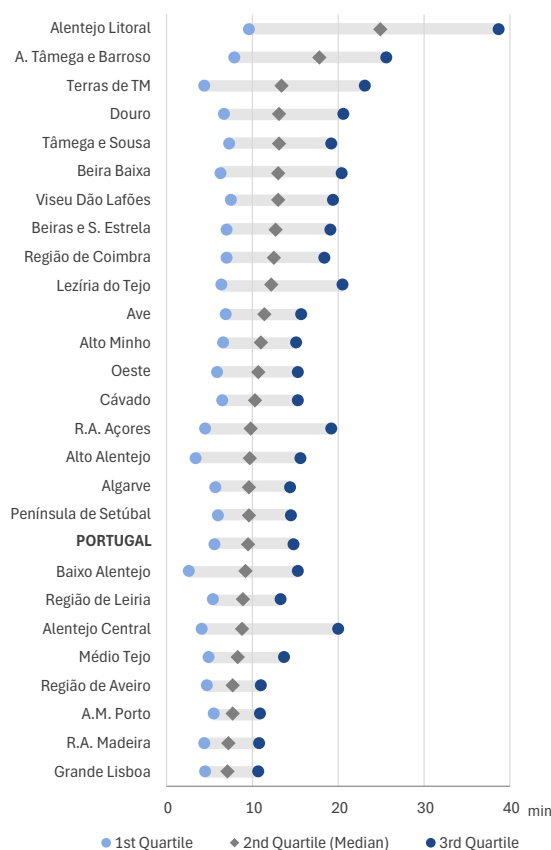
At the sub-regional level, the value of the 1st quartile was lowest in the Baixo Alentejo sub-region (2.6 minutes), while the lowest 3rd quartile value was recorded in Grande Lisboa (10.7 minutes). The Área Metropolitana do Porto

recorded the smallest disparity between the 1st and 3rd quartiles of access time by light car to the nearest museum: 5.4 minutes.

On the other hand, Alentejo Litoral recorded the highest values for the 1st and 3rd quartiles: 9.6 and 38.7 minutes, respectively. This sub-region also showed the greatest internal disparity, with a difference of 29.1 minutes between these two quartiles.

Figure 2

MEDIAN, 1ST AND 3RD QUANTILES OF ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION TO THE NEAREST MUSEUM (MINUTES), PORTUGAL AND NUTS 3, 2023



EDUCATION – TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the 2023/2024 academic year, the median access time by light car of the resident population aged 18 to 22 to the nearest tertiary educational institution was 12.4 minutes in Portugal.

In the sub-regions of Grande Lisboa (6.4 minutes), Área Metropolitana do Porto (8.9 minutes), Cávado (10.5 minutes), Península de Setúbal (11.5 minutes), and Região Autónoma da Madeira (11.8 minutes), the median

access time was lower than the national reference. Alentejo Litoral was the NUTS 3 sub-region that recorded the highest median access time by light car to the nearest tertiary educational institution: 71.3 minutes.

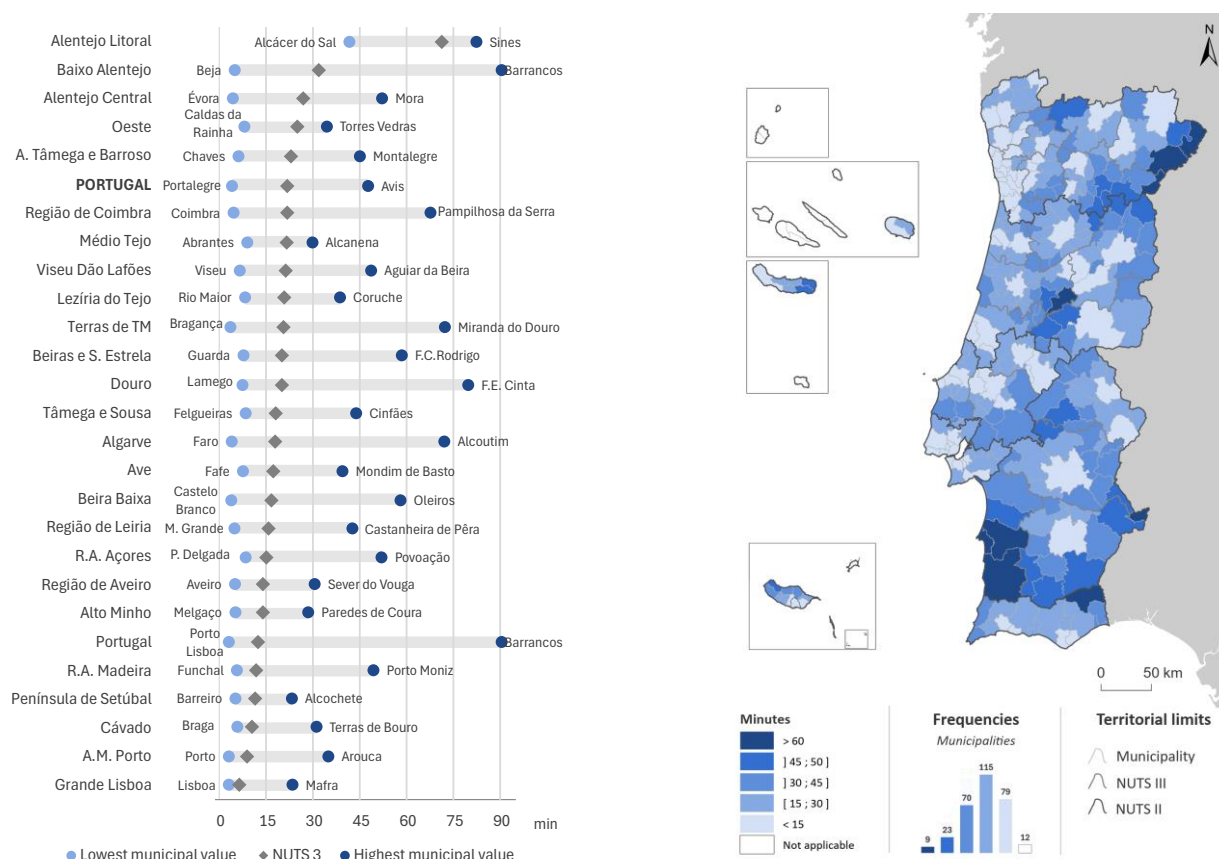
In 79 municipalities (26.7% of the 296 municipalities with available information), located mainly in the sub-regions of Área Metropolitana do Porto, Grande Lisboa, and Península de Setúbal, the resident population aged 18 to 22 could access the nearest tertiary educational institution in less than 15 minutes using a light car. In the 2023/2024 academic year, the municipalities of Lisboa and Porto recorded the lowest median access times: 3.1 minutes in both.

By contrast, with median access times exceeding one hour, the following stood out: 1) a group of contiguous municipalities in the interior of the Norte region – Miranda do Douro, Mogadouro, and Freixo de Espada à Cinta; 2) the municipality of Pampilhosa da Serra, in Centro; 3) Santiago do Cacém, Odemira, Sines, and Barrancos, in Alentejo; and 4) the municipality of Alcoutim in Algarve.

Península de Setúbal was the sub-region with the lowest difference between municipalities in the median access time by light car to the nearest tertiary educational institution (18.1 minutes). Baixo Alentejo (85.5 minutes) and Douro (72.3 minutes) recorded, in the 2023/2024 academic year, the greatest disparities between municipalities regarding the access time to the nearest tertiary educational institution.

Figure 3

MEDIAN ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION AGED 18 TO 22 YEARS OLD TO THE NEAREST TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION (MINUTES), PORTUGAL, NUTS 3 AND MUNICIPALITY, 2023/2024



Note: For the municipalities of Calheta, Corvo, Horta, Lajes das Flores, Lajes do Pico, Madalena, Santa Cruz da Graciosa, Santa Cruz das Flores, São Roque do Pico, Velas, Vila do Porto, and Porto Santo, no data is presented for this indicator due to the absence of tertiary educational institutions accessible by light car.

In the 2023/2024 academic year, the 25% of the resident population aged 18 to 22 with the shortest access time by light car to the nearest tertiary educational institution took up to 6.3 minutes (1st quartile). In contrast, the 25% of the population with the longest access time could reach it in 21.5 minutes or more (3rd quartile).

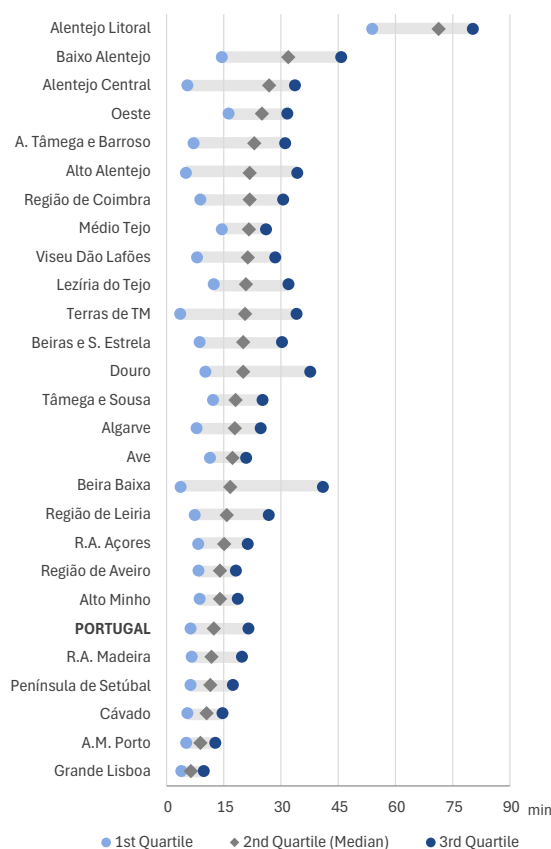
At the sub-regional level, the 1st quartile value was lowest in Terras de Trás-os-Montes (3.6 minutes) and highest in Alentejo Litoral (53.9 minutes) – a value that stood out for being above the 3rd quartile of all other NUTS 3

sub-regions in the country. The 3rd quartile was also the highest in Alentejo Litoral (80.3 minutes) and the lowest in Grande Lisboa (9.8 minutes).

The sub-regions of Beira Baixa, Baixo Alentejo, and Terras de Trás-os-Montes showed the greatest disparities, above 30 minutes, between the 3rd and 1st quartile values of access time by light car to the nearest tertiary educational institution.

Figure 4

MEDIAN, 1ST AND 3RD QUANTILES OF ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION AGED 18 TO 22 YEARS OLD TO THE NEAREST TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION (MINUTES), PORTUGAL AND NUTS 3, 2023/2024



CIVIL PROTECTION – FIRE BRIGADES

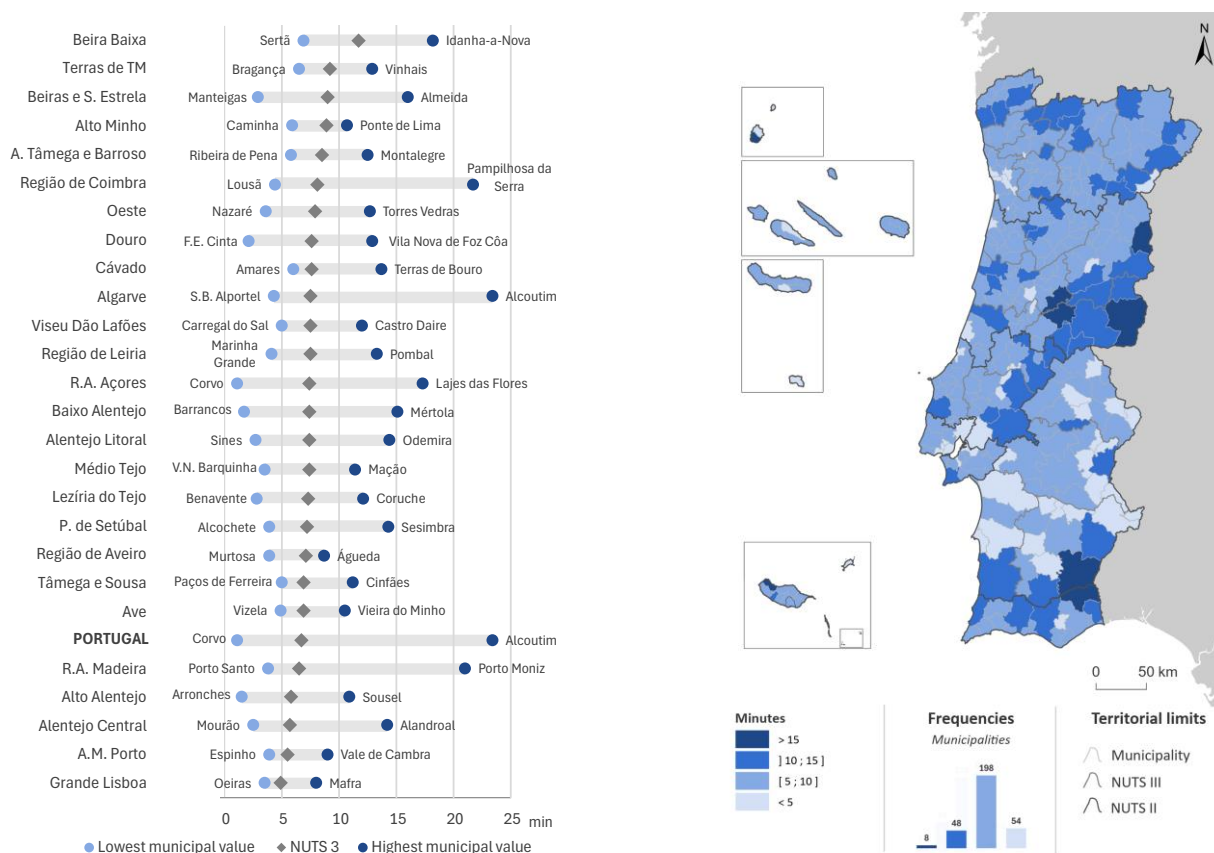
In 2023, the median access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest fire brigade was 6.7 minutes at the national level. Apart from the Beira Baixa sub-region (11.7 minutes), all other NUTS 3 recorded median access times below 10 minutes, with the lowest time in Grande Lisboa (4.9 minutes).

In the reference year, in 252 municipalities (81.8% of the total), the resident population could access the nearest fire brigade in 10 minutes or less using a light car. Within this group, in 54 municipalities, located mainly in Grande Lisboa, Área Metropolitana do Porto, and the Alentejo region, the travel time was less than 5 minutes. Conversely, higher median access times were observed in municipalities of the Centro and Algarve regions, with the municipalities of Alcoutim, Pampilhosa da Serra, and Porto Moniz recording the highest median access times, above 20 minutes.

In Grande Lisboa (4.5 minutes), Região de Aveiro, and Alto Minho (4.8 minutes in both), differences between municipalities in the median access time by light car to the nearest fire brigade were below 5 minutes. By contrast, Algarve was the sub-region that recorded the greatest disparity between municipalities (19.1 minutes) in the median access time.

Figure 5

MEDIAN ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION TO THE NEAREST FIRE BRIGADE (MINUTES),
PORTUGAL, NUTS 3 AND MUNICIPALITY, 2023



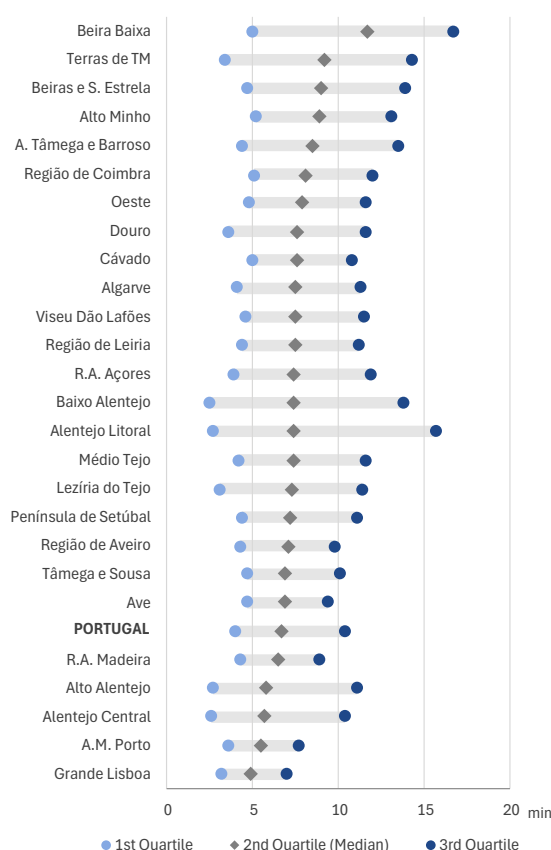
In Portugal, in 2023, the 25% of the resident population with the shortest access time by light car to the nearest fire brigade took up to 4.0 minutes (1st quartile). By contrast, the 25% of the population with the longest access times needed 10.4 minutes or more to reach this type of facility (3rd quartile).

At the sub-regional level, the 1st quartile value was lowest in Baixo Alentejo (2.5 minutes) and highest in the Alto Minho (5.2 minutes). The 3rd quartile ranged from 7.0 minutes in Grande Lisboa to 16.7 minutes in Beira Baixa.

Disparities between the 1st and 3rd quartiles of median access times to the nearest fire brigade were most pronounced in the sub-regions of Alentejo Litoral, Beira Baixa, Baixo Alentejo, and Terras de Trás-os-Montes, with differences exceeding 10 minutes. Conversely, Grande Lisboa, Área Metropolitana do Porto, Região Autónoma da Madeira, and Ave recorded differences of less than 5 minutes between the 1st and 3rd quartiles, showing a more homogeneous distribution in the population's access time to the nearest fire brigade.

Figure 6

MEDIAN, 1ST AND 3RD QUANTILES OF ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION TO THE NEAREST FIRE BRIGADE (MINUTES), PORTUGAL AND NUTS 3, 2023



HEALTH – HOSPITAL INSTITUTIONS

In 2022, in Portugal, the median access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest hospital was 10.9 minutes. This time was higher when considering hospitals with emergency services (12.7 minutes) and with childbirth services (14.4 minutes).

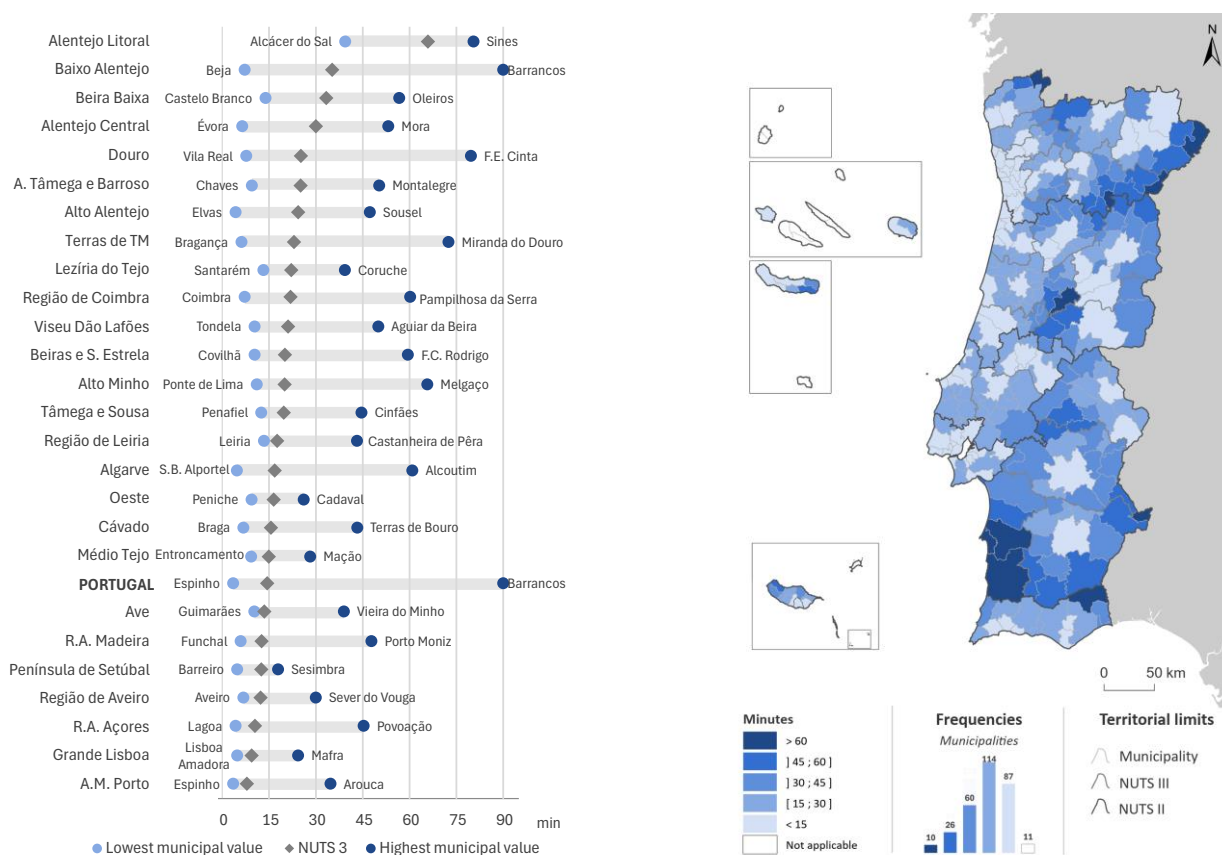
Regarding hospitals with childbirth services, the median access time by light car of the resident population varied, at the sub-regional level, between 7.9 minutes in the NUTS 3 of Grande Lisboa and 65.9 minutes in Alentejo Litoral.

The municipal analysis of this indicator showed lower median access times in municipalities along the mainland coastal area, particularly in a strip between the sub-regions of Alto Minho and Península de Setúbal. In the sub-regions of Grande Lisboa and Área Metropolitana do Porto, except for the municipalities of Vale de Cambra and Arouca (Área Metropolitana do Porto) and Mafra (Grande Lisboa), all municipalities recorded median access times below 15 minutes. In contrast, municipalities in the mainland interior and the coastal strip of the Alentejo region generally registered higher access times by light car to hospitals with childbirth services.

In 2022, Península de Setúbal was the sub-region with the lowest difference between municipalities in the median access time by light car to the nearest hospital institution with childbirth services (13.1 minutes): the shortest time was recorded in Barreiro (4.8 minutes) and the longest in Sesimbra (17.9 minutes). Baixo Alentejo (82.8 minutes), Douro (72.0 minutes), and Terras de Trás-os-Montes (66.3 minutes) showed the greatest disparities in access times between municipalities, exceeding one hour.

Figure 7

MEDIAN ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL INSTITUTION WITH
CHILDBIRTH SERVICE (MINUTES), PORTUGAL, NUTS 3 AND MUNICIPALITY, 2022



Note: For the municipalities of Calheta, Corvo, Lajes das Flores, Lajes do Pico, Madalena, Santa Cruz da Graciosa, Santa Cruz das Flores, São Roque do Pico, Velas, Vila do Porto, and Porto Santo, no data is presented for this indicator due to the absence of hospital institutions with childbirth services accessible by light car.

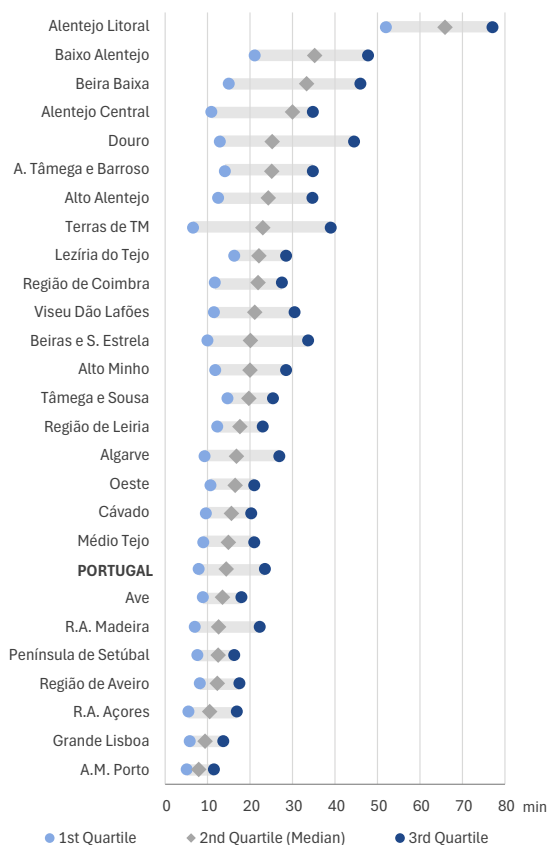
In 2022, the 25% of the resident population with the shortest access time by light car to the nearest hospital with childbirth services took up to 7.9 minutes (1st quartile). In contrast, the 25% of the population with the longest access times needed 23.5 minutes or more (3rd quartile).

At the sub-regional level, the 1st quartile value was lowest in Área Metropolitana do Porto (5.1 minutes) and highest in Alentejo Litoral (52.0 minutes) – a value that exceeded the 3rd quartile of all other NUTS 3 sub-regions in the country. The 3rd quartile was likewise highest in Alentejo Litoral (77.1 minutes) and lowest in Área Metropolitana do Porto (11.5 minutes).

Terras de Trás-os-Montes, Douro, and Beira Baixa showed the greatest disparities, above 30 minutes, between the 3rd and 1st quartile values of access time by light car to the nearest hospital institution with childbirth services.

Figure 8

MEDIAN, 1ST AND 3RD QUANTILES OF ACCESS TIME BY LIGHT CAR OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL INSTITUTION WITH CHILDBIRTH SERVICE (MINUTES), PORTUGAL AND NUTS 3, 2022



TECHNICAL NOTE

The results presented in this press release are based on the use of information produced in the Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest (CE-SIG).

The interactive application [Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest](#) (CE-SIG), part of [StatsLab](#) – Statistics under development, provides research and spatial analysis tools that allow consultation of facilities and services of general interest, of a public or private institutional nature, with results geolocated on a point basis.

The CE-SIG application also allows the capture of the level of provision of services of general interest to the population and the monitoring of territorial development patterns. This application also provides information characterising the facilities and services provided, as well as the territories in which they are located, and information on the geographies of accessibility and demand for the facilities/services.

All data related to equipment and services within the scope of CE-SIG come from various sources, and are subject to validation, processing and integration with other existing databases at Statistics Portugal, taking advantage of the potential of the information associated with the National Data Infrastructure.

For the preparation of accessibility and demand geographies (service areas and catchment areas), geoprocessing methodological procedures were implemented, considering the different types of facilities and respective services. These procedures also enabled the production of accessibility indicators and statistics, relevant for characterising the accessibility patterns of the population to facilities and the respective services they provide. Based on the location of the facilities, resident population data, and information on the road network, and by defining the mode of travel (light car or walking), the access times of the resident population (in minutes) to the nearest facility were calculated.

For more information, please consult the [Technical Note](#) of the Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest and the press release “[Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest \(CE-SIG\) – Interactive application](#)”.

KEY CONCEPTS

Service of general interest: Service aiming to meet the essential needs and fundamental rights of citizens, based on the principles of solidarity and equal access, constituting a fundamental element in promoting economic, social, and territorial cohesion, as well as sustainable development. Whether economic or non-economic in nature, this service covers various areas such as education, health, culture, civil protection, social services, housing, justice, among others, being accessibility, quality, and cost important indicators for its assessment.

Geographical location: Reference point obtained from the intersection of geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude) defined under a reference coordinate system or from descriptive location information (addresses).

Service area: Geographic area of accessibility to facilities and respective services that represents a time interval (isochronous) or physical distance to such facilities and services.

Walking time: Delimited service area based on distance-time intervals (isochronous) to a facility, considering walking on the network of roads where this mode is allowed.

Light car driving time: Delimited service area based on distance-time intervals (isochronous) to a facility, considering the travel by light car on the network of roads where this mode is allowed.

Other concepts associated with the Map on Facilities and Services of General Interest can be consulted in the [Statistics Portugal Metadata System](#).

INDICATORS AVAILABLE AT STATISTICS PORTUGAL OFFICIAL WEBSITE

The results presented are available at www.ine.pt, in [Thematic folders – Municipalities – Asymmetry indicators at local and interregional level](#).

[Access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest museum \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by foot of the resident population to the nearest museum \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by light car of the resident population between 18 and 22 years old to the nearest tertiary educational institution \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by light car of the resident population with 18 or more years old to the nearest tertiary educational institution \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by foot of the resident population with 18 or more years old to the nearest tertiary educational institution \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by foot of the resident population between 18 and 22 years old to the nearest tertiary educational institution \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest fire brigade \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by foot of the resident population to the nearest fire brigade \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest hospital institution \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest hospital institution with emergency service \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)

[Access time by light car of the resident population to the nearest hospital institution with childbirth service \(min\) by Geographic localization \(NUTS - 2024\) and Quartiles; Annual](#)