

News Deserts Europe 2025

PORTUGAL REPORT

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Presentation

Regarding the reality of any specific territory, particularly in so-called peripheral regions of the country, through a media-centred lens, everything seems small. The population seems illiterate, the economy obsolete and daily life appears devoid of interest and dynamism. This perception is made all the greater by media invisibility.

The topics covered in regional and local media may not be the bankruptcy of a bank, the arrest of a celebrity or an accident on a well-known street. There are other subjects: events, politics and personalities from the area, investments, difficulties or crime in the neighbourhood. The importance is the same because, prior to a national identity behind the interest in news, there is a local and regional identity that moves the desire to know what is happening closer to home.

‘Agents of resistance to disinformation.’

This is how Helena Sousa, president of ERC - Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social (Portugal’s Regulatory Authority for Communication) referred to the role of regional and local media outlets during the Colloquium “Dynamics of Political Disinformation in Portugal: Media, Political Parties and Social Networks” (17 September 2025, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã). She added that it is up to these outlets to ensure cultural proximity, political scrutiny and the promotion of local identity. Especially in a scenario where media outlets are disappearing. Between 2000 and 2024 - she said at the time - Portugal went from around 5,000 periodical publications to just 1,675. Of these, 713 were regional in nature.

It is with a view to contributing to this theme that this report has been produced.

By establishing a comparison with the reality in 2022, the aim is to investigate what changes have occurred. Which municipalities have entered and which municipalities have come out of the range of the ‘news desert’ classification? Which municipalities have become threatened by the scarcity of news outlets? Moreover, which have escaped this reality?

In the same vein as the 2022 report, this edition does not aim to identify which territories are the subject of local news stories. Without going there to find out, it would not be easy to know how many are being made invisible by the press. What we aim to record here are the municipalities where non-specialized journalistic media outlets are based and those where none can be found. The main novelty is also to take a regional outlook, using NUTS III. From here, other types of more in-depth studies and analyses may emerge. Something that, in fact, has already been done over the last three years and which we highlight throughout this report.

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Executive Summary

The 2025 report on news deserts in Portugal confirms the continuation of patterns already identified in 2022, with minor variations resulting mainly from methodological adjustments.

MAIN RESULTS

Overall situation

In 2025 (June 1st), Portugal has 891 regional media outlets:

- 399 print newspapers and magazines
- 263 radio stations
- 409 digital outlets

News Deserts in 2025

- 45 municipalities can be classified as news deserts (14.61%)
- 38 municipalities are semi-deserts (12.34%)
- 87 municipalities are at risk (28.25%)
- 170 municipalities have some level of media outlet scarcity (55.52%)

Evolution compared to 2022

- Reduction in total deserts (54 → 45)
- Increase in semi-deserts (24 → 38)
- Total number of municipalities in some level of desert rose (78 → 83)
- Threatened municipalities remained stable (87)
- Total number of municipalities with problems increased slightly (166 → 170)

Print and digital media

- Local print media outlets in deserts or semi-deserts: 182 (2022) → 187 (2025)
- Digital media outlets in news deserts: 157 (2022) → 156 (2025)
- Creation of 76 new digital media outlets since 2022 (65 of which are exclusively online)

Regional radio stations

- 109 municipalities in desert areas (35.39%)
- 19 in semi-desert areas (6.17%)
- Total: 138 municipalities with scarce to no radio coverage (44.81%)
- Drop in total number compared to 2022 (118 desert areas → 109)

Regional distribution (NUTS III)

- Lack of media outlets is concentrated in the peripheral provinces, especially Alentejo and Trás-os-Montes.
- Coastal and metropolitan areas (Lisbon, Porto and Setúbal) have virtually no deserts.
- Critical sub-regions:

Alto Alentejo: only nine media outlets serving a population of 103,000 inhabitants.

Alto Tâmega: 15 outlets for 78,000 inhabitants (highest ratio of news outlets per capita).

Setúbal Peninsula: only two municipalities are deserts, with 29 outlets for 848,000 inhabitants.

Greater Lisbon: no deserts or semi-deserts; only Amadora is identified as a threatened municipality.

CONCLUSIONS

The digital format has become dominant and registers the most growth, albeit with limitations in the frequency and quality of news production in some of these news outlets.

Significant territorial inequalities persist, with a concentration of outlets in urban and coastal regions and marked fragility in the interior.

The national scenario is one of stability, with minor methodological adjustments influencing the results.

What are news deserts?

The expression “news desert” emerged in the United States at the end of the first decade of this century, in studies on the impacts of the journalism crisis on regional media.

Abernathy (2018, 2020) defines a news desert as:

“A community, whether rural or urban, with limited access to reliable and comprehensive news and information that fuels democracy at the local level.”

The report *Expanding News Desert*, published in 2020 by Penelope Abernathy with the Knight Chair in Journalism and Digital Media Economics, showed that, in the United States, most residents living in news deserts are poorer, older and less educated than the average American. This is because communities that are further away from large urban centres, with lower levels of economic activity, they are the most susceptible to the crisis in journalism. The media cannot find readers or the resources needed to keep their activity going. These communities are the first to see their newspapers shut down in times of economic crisis (Abernathy, 2020).

Because on average they serve communities made up of older readers, these newspapers are unable to make the transition to digital in times of economic crisis. The media come up against yet another barrier in this transition: the difficulty of generating profit from their digital editions, caused by the mistrust of local advertisers and the conversion metrics in monetisation tools, which require audience numbers that a newspaper in a small community cannot achieve (Hindman, 2015).

Therefore, news deserts arise in regions far from major centres, with low economic activity, where old local newspapers can no longer sustain themselves, and the region is not attractive to new ventures in the media sector.

This scenario is particularly challenging a time of increasingly rapid dissemination of misinformation through digital platforms in the local context (Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). The study *Local News Deserts* in the UK showed that, with the decline of regional print media, communication about local events has migrated to the internet and digital media. Digital social media has become dominant for disseminating news about the local context, both content produced by communities within social groups and also for the distribution of news produced by local news outlets. In this context, digital social media is seen as the primary source of dissemination of local disinformation due to the lack of verification of posts circulating on these networks (Barclay et al, 2022; Correia, Jerónimo & Gradim, 2019).

Introduction

Since the publication of the **first mapping of ‘news deserts’ in Portugal** (Jerónimo, Ramos & Torre, 2022), the topic has been attracting growing interest in various sectors of society, including academia, politics, and civil society groups. This pioneering study, both in terms of its subject matter and scope, highlighted the structural fragility of local journalism in Portugal, with a particular focus on the low visibility of peripheral areas. This study, pioneering in its subject matter and scope, highlighted the structural fragility of local journalism in Portugal, particularly the low visibility of small territories. This finding poses a persistent challenge both to the citizen participation and to the vitality of local democracy. The crisis facing local journalism is the backdrop to this phenomenon, marked by financial constraints, credibility issues and even existential concerns, including declining advertising revenue and the increasing precarity of the profession.

The inaugural study revealed that more than half of Portuguese municipalities (53.9%) either were news deserts already or they were at risk of becoming them. Among these, 25.3% had unsatisfactory or infrequent news coverage, with 17.5% being total deserts (without any media outlets) and 7.8% being in a semi-desert situation (with less frequent or poor coverage). In addition, 88 municipalities (28.6%) were classified as threatened because they had only one local media outlet providing regular news coverage. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the inland districts of Portugal, which are characterised by lower population density and reduced economic dynamism. A similar trend is observed in Brazil, where news deserts are also concentrated in areas with lower population density and greater economic fragility. In both cases, this is a direct consequence of the crisis in traditional journalism business models, exacerbated by the migration of audiences and revenues to large digital platforms such as Google and Facebook, which account for a significant share of the advertising market. Nevertheless, the data suggest that citizens’ interest in local news remains high, which makes the contrast between the demand and supply of information of this kind even more evident.



Available at
[labcom.ubi.pt/
news-deserts-
europe-2022-
portugal-report/](http://labcom.ubi.pt/news-deserts-europe-2022-portugal-report/)

Academic literature has been defining more precisely the concept of “news desert”, which can be understood as the absence or reduction in the availability, access or use of local news and community media (Gulyas, Jenkins & Bergström, 2023), and also as “communities with minimal access to critical news and information” (Abernathy, 2023). More accurately, the concept does not exclusively refer to the absence of newspapers, but also to situations of insufficient local information production or access compared to the needs of communities. The term news desert emerged in the United States in the 2000s, and that reality was exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis. Studies on this subject tend to be organised across three main axes: media outlets, media ecology and news content (Gulyas et al., 2023).

Since 2022, new research has not only confirmed earlier trends; it has also introduced additional perspectives on the Portuguese reality, enriching the understanding of the phenomenon at an international level. One notable example is the study “Young People and Media Consumption: A Comparative Analysis between News Deserts and Non-Deserts in Portugal” (Maneta et al., 2024), which demonstrated the direct impact of the (non)existence of local journalism on the consumption of information by young people aged 15 to 24. The authors found that, in regions where the news desert diagnosis is most dire, such as Alentejo, young people spend less time on social media, on streaming television, and on mobile devices. Paradoxically, although these young people attach less importance to the news in their daily lives, journalists continue to emerge as reference points for understanding the world. This paradox suggests that, even in fragile media ecosystems, there is fertile ground for developing strategies for access to information that promote media literacy and civic engagement.

The absence of local news coverage creates favourable conditions for the proliferation of misinformation, amplified by the algorithmic functioning of digital platforms, which prioritise popularity and

interaction over verification and accuracy (Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022, 2023). The growing number of news deserts is particularly worrying in a context where misinformation spreads rapidly through digital social networks, often without any journalistic filtering. This vulnerability undermines public trust and can distort opinion and affect electoral participation. Several studies emphasise that territories without news coverage tend to be more prone to phenomena such as misinformation, populism and democratic crises associated with high rates of electoral abstention. Time pressure and resource scarcity, identified in Portugal and Spain, also leads to excessive dependence on official sources, reinforced by a journalistic tradition that has historically treated audiences as passive. Research in Nordic contexts (Steensen, 2023) shows that in communities deprived of independent journalism, there is an erosion of the local public sphere, leading to ‘casual democracies’. However, other studies point to the potential of community participation and the ‘wisdom of crowds’ in mitigating disinformation (Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2023), which suggests that strengthening local media could be one of the most effective responses to the problem.

It is important to note that the problem of news deserts is not limited to the closure of media outlets. The difficulty in recruiting qualified journalists, even in relatively stable media environments, is also an obstacle. Research by Olsen and Mathisen (2023), focusing on the Norwegian context, shows that economic, geographical and professional prestige factors are generating a veritable ‘brain drain’ in local journalism, restricting coverage of relevant issues and ultimately compromising the democratic quality of information.

In this context, community journalism has been identified as a viable alternative. Ramos and Torre (2023) emphasise the role of these media outlets in producing reliable and contextualised news, tailored to the needs of communities. This model, as a community-led, non-profit initiative, brings journalism closer to citizens, while strengthening social cohesion and democratic vitality. Its sustainability often relies on donations or crowdfunding initiatives, which are proving to be credible economic strategies for revitalising the information ecosystem. Ferrier (2023) advocates the creation of ‘news oases’, while Pickard (2020, cited in Wang, 2023) advocates the relevance of diversified funding models, ranging from crowdfunding to direct state support. In addition, Torre et al. (2024) have shown that,

in towns without formal news coverage, citizens mainly stay informed through social networks and institutional channels, which showcases the urgency of creating independent and non-partisan solutions.

Despite the potential in digital technology, Portuguese regional media are conducting a slow and insufficient technological transition (Jerónimo, 2015; Noronha & Di Fátima, 2023), aggravated by a shortage of financial and human resources, as well as the precariousness of the internet infrastructure in many inland regions. Recent studies also point to a disconnect between local newspapers and the digital generation (Ricarte & Ramos, 2023), highlighting that the persistence of traditional business models, which are ill-suited to new consumption practices and the redistribution of advertising revenue, is a factor contributing to desertification. In the United States, Wang (2023) notes a consistent decline in print circulation between 2018 and 2022, underscoring the urgency of business innovation and the expansion of broadband access.

It is important to note, however, that the mere presence of journalists in a territory does not, in itself, guarantee community involvement. Mota (2023) focuses on the need to rethink traditional news values in order to bring journalism closer to the expectations of its audience. Experiments such as public journalism in the 1990s or participatory journalism in the early decades of the 21st century have already sought to strengthen this proximity. More Recently, dialogic journalism (Heikka, 2017) has advocated for the integration of the journalistic process into community initiatives with shared decision-making power, in which journalism is only one element of the network. In line with this perspective, Vogler, Weston and Udris (2023) demonstrate that the concentration of newsrooms in big urban areas can compromise the geographical diversity of journalistic production, leading to processes of information desertification even in contexts with a formal media presence.

In this scenario of structural transformations and persistent challenges, the present study sets out not only to update the mapping of news deserts in Portugal, but also to deepen the analysis of their implications for informed citizenship, democracy and social cohesion. It is important to note that a recent study (Ramos, Torre & Jerónimo, 2023) found no correlation between news deserts and abstention rates in national elections — legislative in Portugal and presidential in Brazil, in 2022. This result suggests

that other variables may be influencing electoral behaviour, and that the relationship between the presence of local media and the strengthening of democracy is more complex than initially assumed. In addition, mapping methodologies vary between countries, as in the case of Portugal (based on official ERC records) and Brazil (based on empirical surveys), which makes direct comparisons difficult. By integrating these recent academic and empirical perspectives, this report aims to serve as a tool to supporting the formulation of public policies and the development of professional practices, contributing to the strengthening of the public sphere.

News deserts around the world

This chapter aims to provide an updated perspective on the situation of news deserts in Brazil and the United States of America (USA) and, for the first time, to compare these to the European reality, based on the most recent studies.

BRAZIL: THE CURRENT SITUATION

The country with the most recent data, among those included in the 2022 News Deserts: Portugal Report, is Brazil, as featured in the Atlas da Notícia (News Atlas). We therefore present a brief overview of the differences between 2021 and 2025 in this country.

In 2021, the Atlas da Notícia identified 2,968 municipalities as news deserts, which corresponded to about half of Brazilian municipalities. These deserts affected 29.3 million people (13.8% of the population). The cities classified as deserts were typically smaller, with an average of 9,800 inhabitants.

The 2025 mapping (referring to a total population of 203,062,512 inhabitants) shows that the problem persists on a large scale:

- There are 2,504 municipalities (45% of the total of 5,570 municipalities) without any news outlets;
- The total population residing in news deserts is 20,668,485 inhabitants, with an average population of 5,908 inhabitants in these municipalities;
- 1,808 municipalities (32.5% of the total) are classified as near deserts, with only 1 or 2 news outlets.
- These municipalities are home to approximately 34.7 million people.

- Only 1,258 municipalities (22.6% of the total) have three or more news outlets, covering the majority of the population (147,627,681).

The highest number of municipalities classified as news deserts in 2025 is found in the regions of the Northeast (890 municipalities) and Southeast (830 municipalities).

In terms of media outlets, 16,269 were identified, of which 14,809 were active. The distribution by type in 2025 is led by digital (38.6%), followed by radio (33.7%), print (19.3%) and television (8.4%).

The closure of media outlets remains a concern, with 1,460 outlets classified as inactive in 2025, which represents an increase of 518 outlets compared to 2023.

USA: THE DEEPENING CRISIS

Portugal's latest report already highlighted the severe crisis in the USA: since 2005, approximately 2,500 newspapers had closed down, and 70 million people were living in a news desert or at-risk community. In 2022, 208 counties had no local newspaper (6.6%), and 1,630 counties had only one outlet (51.9%).

The 2024 update (The State of Local News) reveals a continuing deterioration:

- Since 2005, more than 3,200 print newspapers have closed down;
- Newspapers continue to disappear at a rate of more than two per week – 130 newspapers closed in the last year alone;
- There are 206 counties across the country with no news outlet, an increase from 204 the previous year;
- 1,561 counties have only one local source of news;
- Nearly 55 million people in the US have limited or no access to local news;
- The report identifies 279 counties on a “watch list” for being at high risk of losing their only source of news. These counties are significantly poorer than the rest of the country.

EUROPE: A HOLISTIC ANALYSIS

The study *Uncovering news deserts in Europe* (2024) provides an innovative and holistic perspective on news deserts in the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU). This study assesses the risks to regional, local and community media outlets based on indicators that include the number of media outlets, economic and political conditions, the safety of journalists and social inclusion.

Unlike what happens in Brazil and the United States, the debate on news deserts is not widespread in Europe. In many countries, the term is non-existent (e.g. Bulgaria) or limited to academic circles and stakeholders (e.g. Portugal, Austria, Spain). However, there are debates on related issues, such as the decline of local news (e.g., the Czech Republic) or the overall viability of regional and local media outlets (e.g. Greece, Italy). Countries where the debate is more developed (such as Sweden) tend to perform better in the risk assessment.

European national diversity is significant, ranging from larger countries such as France and Spain, which are vulnerable to desertification in sparsely populated rural areas, to smaller countries (Malta, Luxembourg), where the concept of local news largely overlaps with that of national news.

Geographical and structural risks

Granularity of regional and local media infrastructure

- The situation in rural areas is increasingly problematic (medium aggregate risk). The challenge is exacerbated by press distribution, low digital literacy among the elderly population and poor connectivity in some locations, against a backdrop of disappearing local outlets;
- Romania presents a very high risk in rural areas (almost no local media). Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia present a high risk.
- In suburban areas, the provision of information is problematic (medium risk). The media tend not to cover events specific to these areas or, in disadvantaged areas, focus excessively on crime news (e.g. France and Ireland).

The role of public service media

- Regional and local coverage by public service media (PSM) is crucial and, overall, presents low risk;
- However, five countries (Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland and Latvia) scored high risk for PSM. The case of Hungary is prominent: regional PSM studios were dismantled entirely between 2011 and 2015, and the network of correspondents is insufficient.

Market and reach

- This indicator shows high risk levels in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Poland and Slovenia;
- The digital transformation crisis affects regional and local media outlets due to their limited resources for adaptation and a smaller market.

Editorial independence

- Editorial independence is at high risk, especially in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE);
- Political and economic interference is evident. For example, in Hungary, regional newspapers that are part of KESMA (a pro-government conglomerate) have guaranteed funding through substantial public advertising, which weakens independent voices. In Croatia, state subsidy programmes function as hidden state advertising. In Poland and Malta, the situation of public service broadcasting also reflects political capture.

Social inclusion

In Europe as a whole, most countries scored medium or high risk for minority representation. The Nordic countries (Finland and Sweden), with strong regulations of public service broadcasting, there are satisfactory levels of programming in minority languages. Innovative initiatives to combat desertification and promote the open public sphere are limited. However, there are examples, such as the Nyomtassteis movement in Hungary, which distributes printed news summaries to rural areas without access to the internet, combating government propaganda.

Methodology

The mapping of news deserts in Portugal began in September 2020 (Ramos, 2021) and was updated the following year. In 2022, this report was first published (Jerónimo et al., 2022).

The first edition used data from ERC - Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação (Regulatory Authority for Communication) relating to 31 May 2022. At this stage, two sets of data were considered: The list of periodical publications, both printed and digital, and the list of radio operators. The methodology used in the 2022 edition of the News Deserts report is repeated in the 2025 edition. Thus, the data refer to 1 February 2025 (first phase), with an update on 1 June 2025, based on two tables provided by ERC: Periodical Publications (for printed and digital newspapers) and Radio Operators. Portuguese legislation does not allow for the existence of local television stations. In this case, the only regional television channel available on Pay TV is Porto Canal, based in the municipality of Porto, which also operates as a digital publication.

The following were excluded from the listing of Periodical Publications:

- Publications not classified as regional;
- Publications owned by public entities, such as Municipal Councils and Parish Councils;
- Non-journalistic publications, such as scientific journals and magazines published by professional associations and tourism promotion entities;
- Specialised publications whose content was not 'regionalised', despite being classified as regional;
- Partisan or religious publications that had been classified as regional.
- The following were excluded from the table of radio operators:
- Radio stations that exclusively played music or focused on partisan or religious content, leaving only non-specialized local radio stations;

- Radio operators not classified as local;
- Operators broadcasting exclusively national or non-regionalised content, despite being classified as local;
- Specialised radio operators (e.g. radio stations dedicated to sports).

A third table was created, with the names of all Portuguese municipalities, districts, and regions (NUTS III) and the total number of:

- Print newspapers (published daily to fortnightly);
- Print newspapers (published tri-weekly or less frequently);
- Total number of print newspapers;
- Digital newspapers;
- Local radio stations;
- Radio stations without local newsrooms (exceptional cases where news coverage is considered insufficient);
- Total number of local media outlets;
- Total number of local media outlets excluding tri-weekly or less frequent print newspapers and radio stations without local newsrooms.

We also sought to understand whether, in municipalities with only one or two media outlets, these outlets were actually active. The period under analysis refers to the interval between 1 March and 30 April 2025 in a first phase, and between 1 July to 15 August 2025, in the second phase, with the data presented in this report referring only to the latter.

In the case of newspapers, the verification was carried out by accessing the websites of each publication and, in some cases, their digital social networks (in particular, Facebook) and through telephone contacts with the editorial offices. In each case, the following was investigated: a) the editorial status of the publication; b) whether the publication continues to exist; c) the frequency of publication updates.

For print media outlets, news coverage was considered satisfactory when daily, weekly, or fortnightly newspapers were found to be in operation; in digital media, only outlets with daily or, at most, weekly updates were considered. Digital media outlets that had not been updated in 90 days or more were discarded.

For this purposes it was understood that, in view of the transformations brought about by the digital revolution, publications with a frequency broader than once a fortnight are insufficient or unsatisfactory. Even in

municipalities with small populations, it would be necessary to produce news at least every two weeks. It should also be noted that monthly newspapers with daily or weekly frequency on the internet were included as regular and satisfactory digital publications. In these cases, there is no news desert.

The methodology did not include an assessment of whether the news content is produced by journalists with professional licences. The characteristics of the published news items were not analysed: there was no assertion of whether the news items were original productions or whether they were a direct copy of content from other media or entities (with or without alterations).

In the case of radio stations, due to the greater difficulty in assessing the content that is broadcast, three stages of verification were employed. Radio stations were associated in the data with the municipality where they are licensed, which does not always necessarily correspond to their headquarters. Next, the following was observed:

- a) whether they had a website;
- b) whether that website has up to date local news;
- c) whether the radio station's editorial statute mentions having journalists or local news production.

For radio stations that did not have a functional website, the existence of digital social networks such as Facebook was taken into account, and the same parameters were checked in that platform rather than a website. Lastly, in the period between March and April 2025, a team of volunteer doctoral students also assisted in verifying local radio stations by contacting and listening to them. Municipalities with radio stations that have professional journalists located in the municipality (or in a neighbouring municipality) and with local news coverage were considered satisfactory. After analysis, some situations were identified that resulted in the municipality being classified as having less frequent or unsatisfactory news coverage. These are:

- a) radio stations with journalists stationed outside the municipality, with studios/newsrooms in a non-neighbouring municipality;
- b) radio stations with the same journalist covering several municipalities and being responsible for more than one radio station at the same time;
- c) radio stations with the same journalist assigned to cover several municipalities located on different islands (special case of the Azores);

- d) radio stations that have their news produced by an external agency;
- e) radio stations without journalists during the period under review.

Once again, in the case of radio stations, the methodology did not include an assessment in newsrooms of whether the news content is produced by journalists with professional licences, nor an analysis of the characteristics of the news published. Based on the responses, the data was updated, resulting in a set of maps.

CLASSIFICATIONS:

Like in 2022, the classification of Portugal's news deserts was developed from the methodologies used in the Atlas da Notícia do Brasil (2022) and the reports Expanding News Desert (Abernathy, 2020) and The State of Local News 2022 (Abernathy, 2022). The classifications are:

News Desert. Portuguese municipality without any local news. Radio stations without local news and partisan newspapers without local news were not considered. Print and digital publications not registered with the ERC were also excluded. Municipalities with only a specialised media outlet, not providing non-specialised local news, were also considered deserts.

Semi-desert-desert. Portuguese municipality with infrequent or occasional news programmes, classified as one of the following situations: a) The only media outlet is a newspaper published less regularly than fortnightly; b) the only media outlet is a radio station located in the municipality, but with no journalists in that territory (editorial office located in a non-neighbouring municipality).

Threatened. Portuguese municipality with a single a media outlet that produces regular local news.

Out of the desert. Municipality with two or more media outlets that produce regular local news.

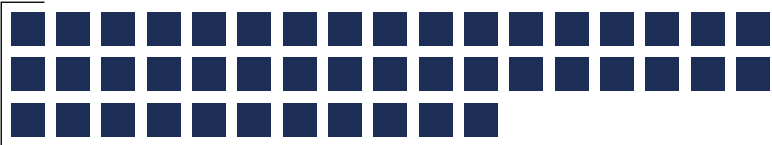
Maps of news deserts

PORTUGAL

News deserts 2025

45

Municipalities in
news deserts



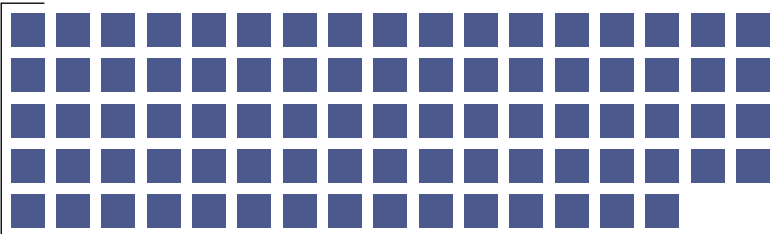
38

Municipalities in
semi-desert



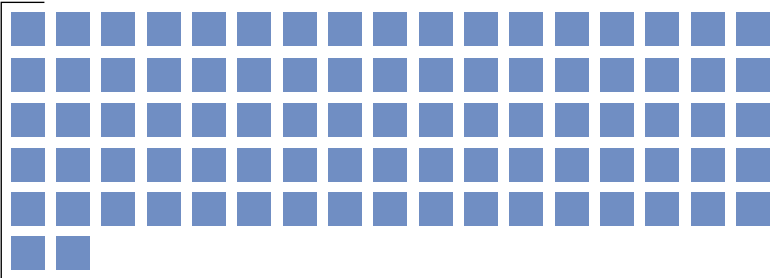
83

Municipalities in
news deserts and
semi-desert



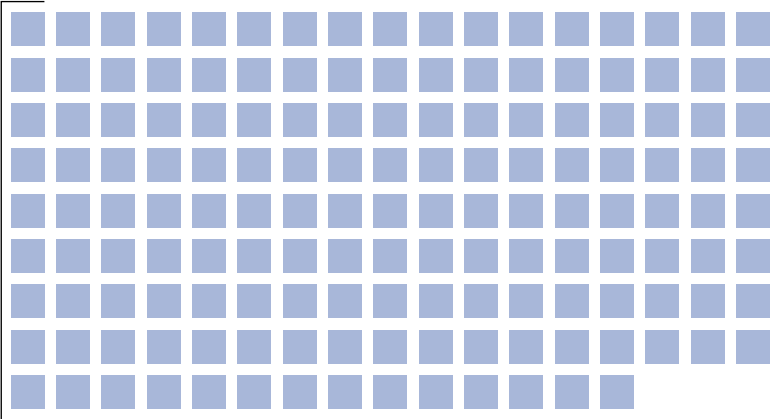
87

Threatened
municipalities



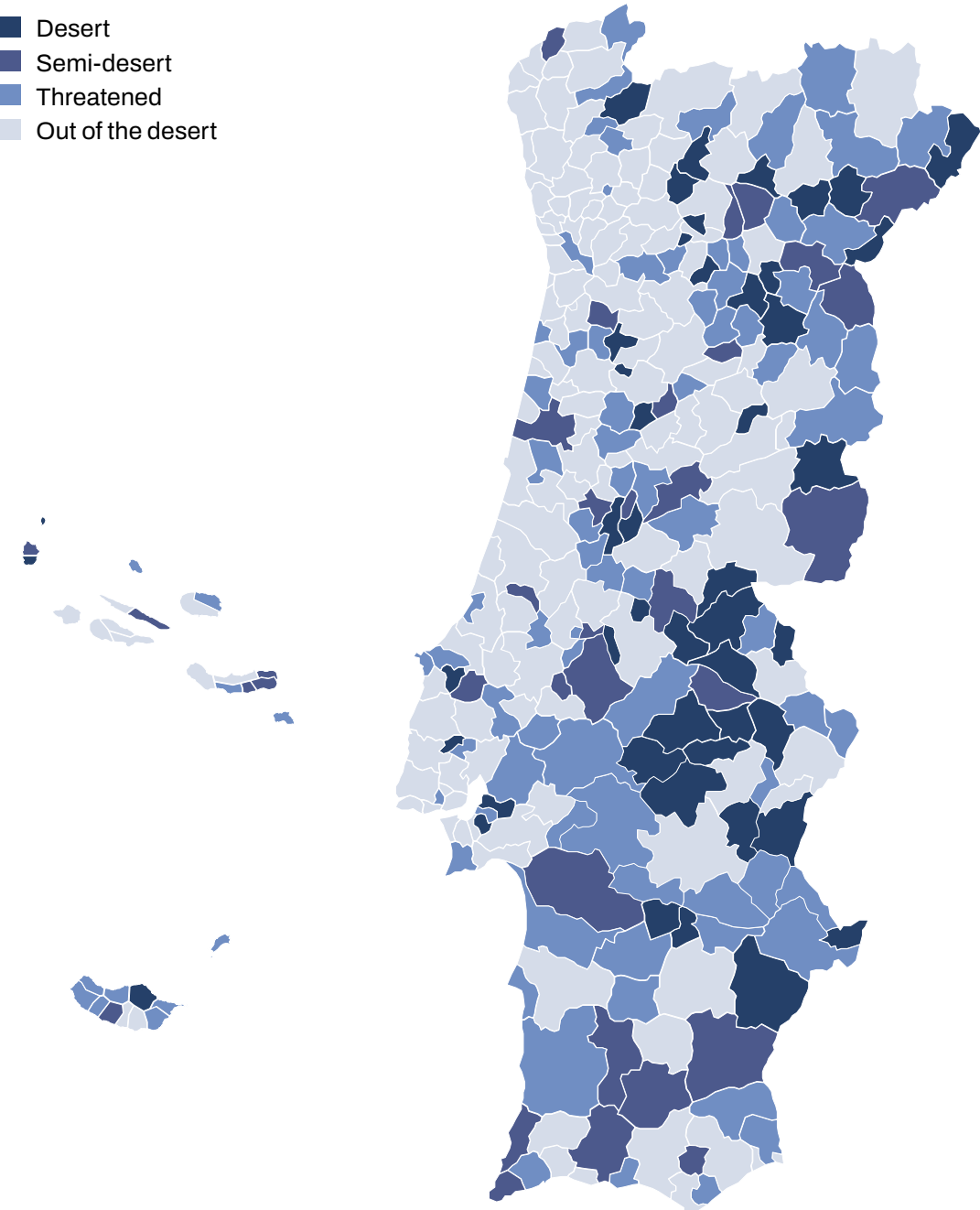
170

Municipalities with
some problems



Municipal distribution

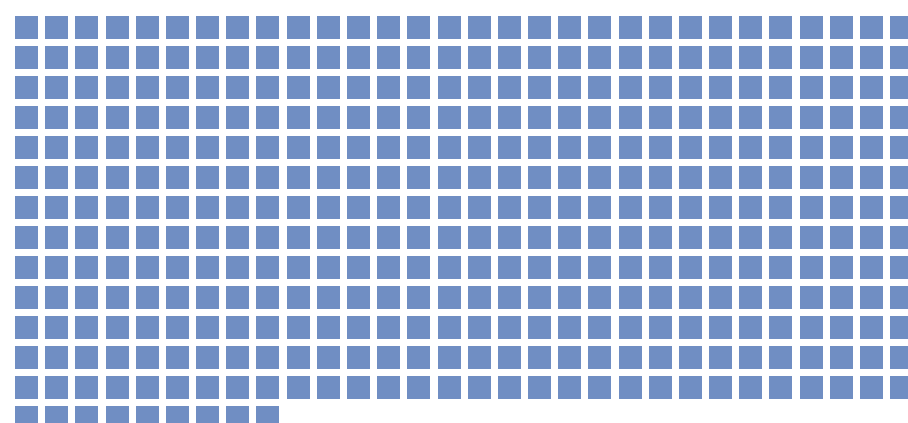
- Desert
- Semi-desert
- Threatened
- Out of the desert



News deserts 2025

891

total local media outlets

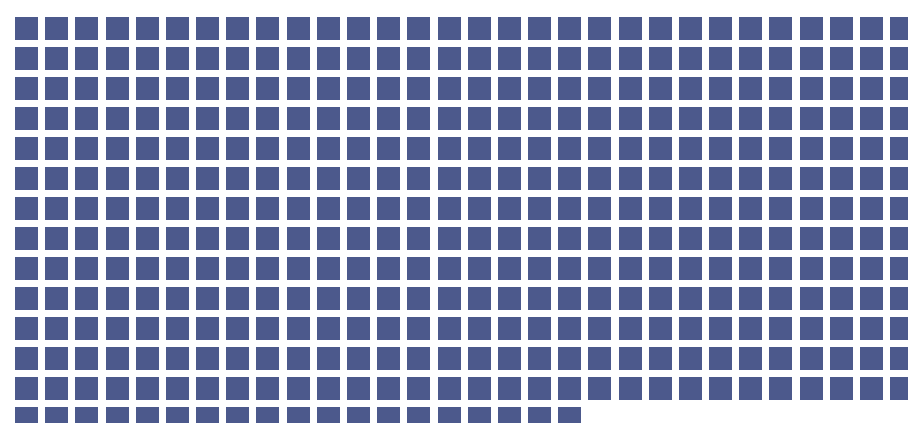
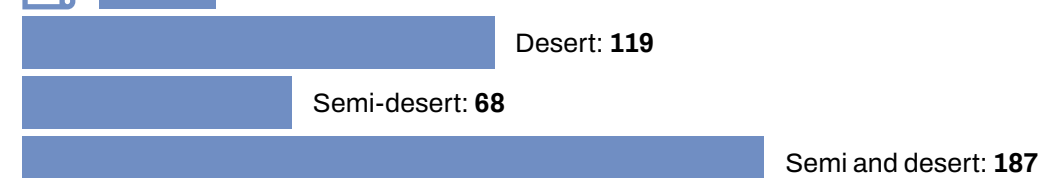


399

total print newspapers



PRINT



409

total digital newspapers



DIGITAL



236

total radio stations



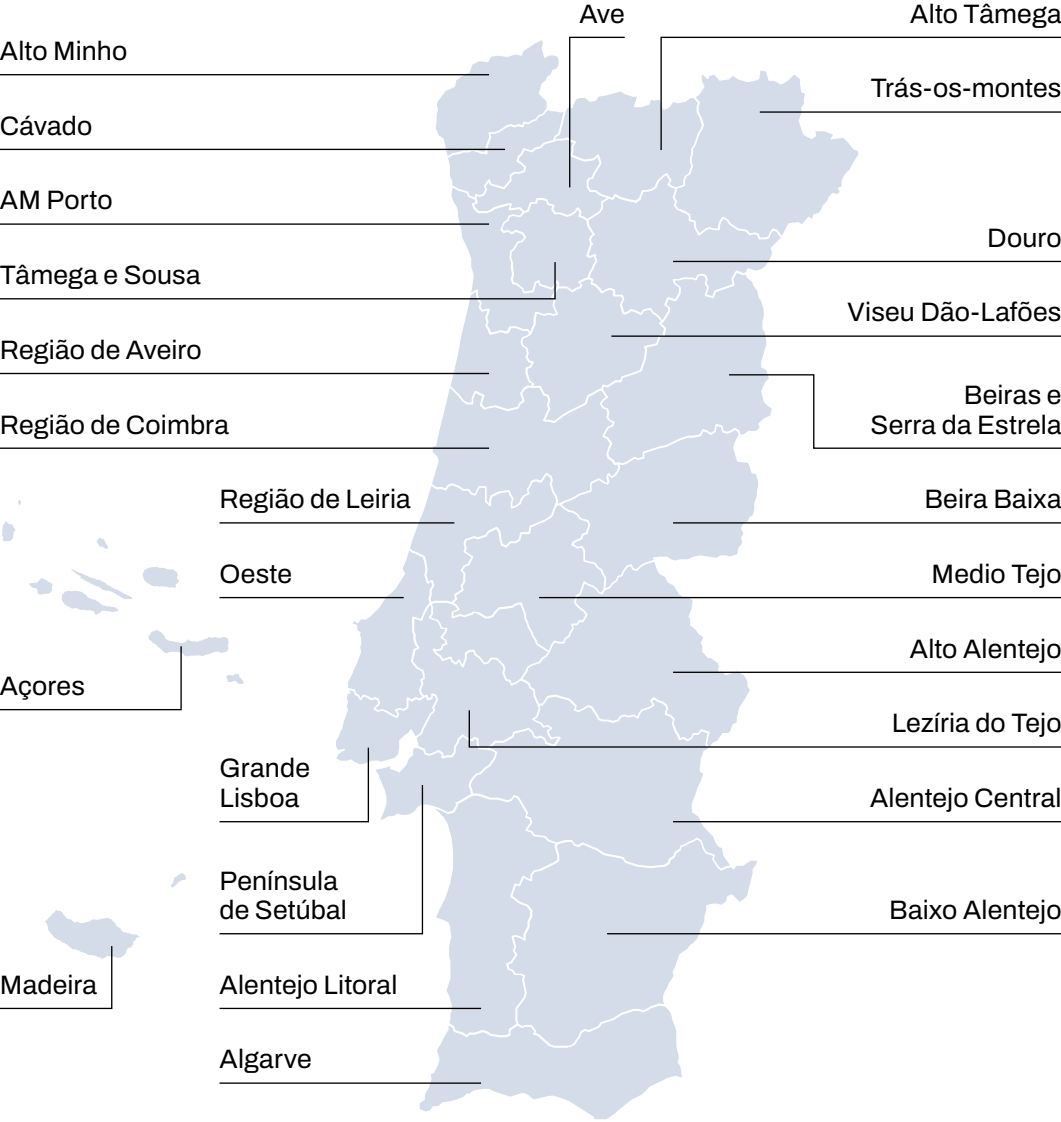
RADIO



Maps of news deserts

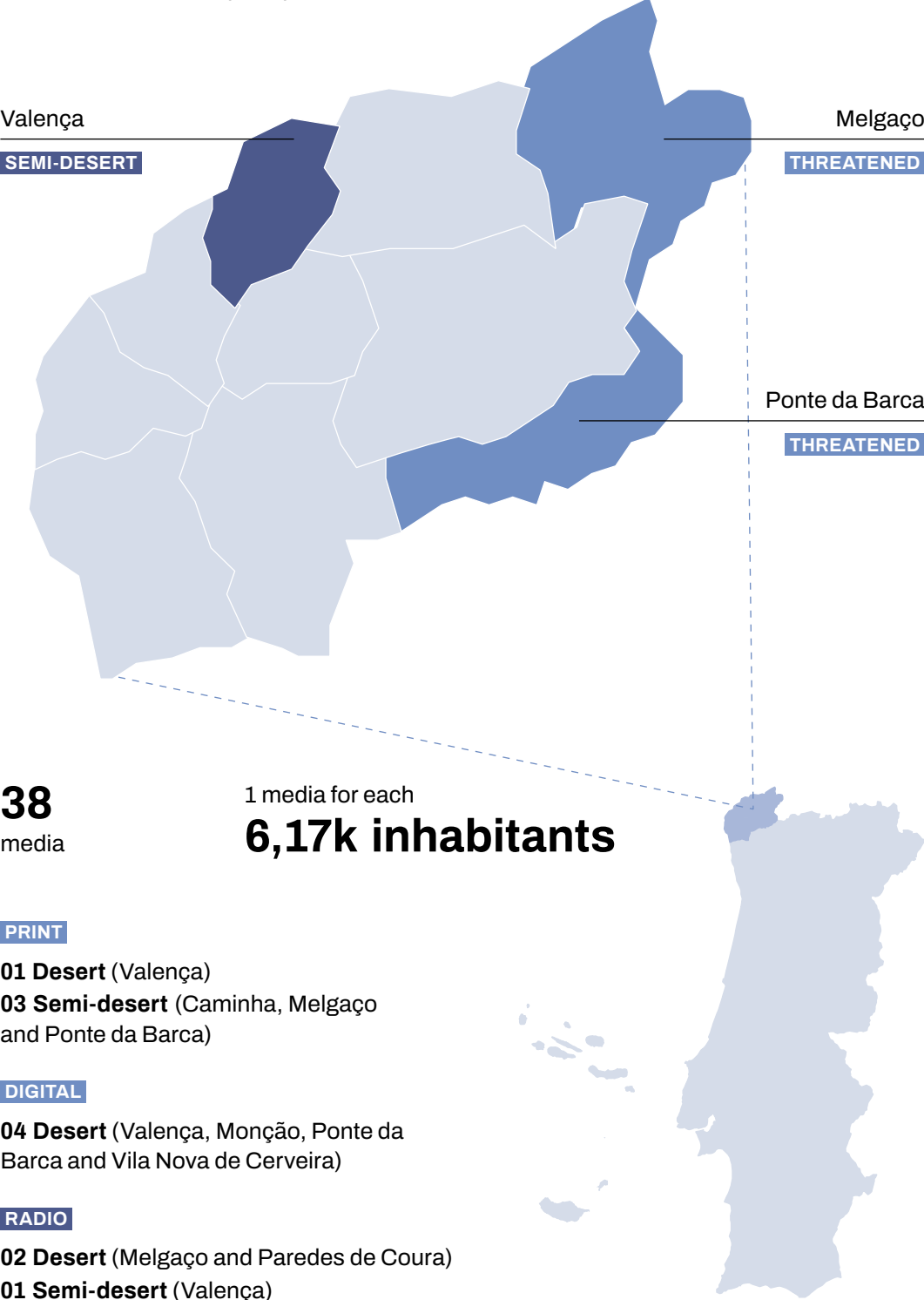
NUTS III

Regional distribution



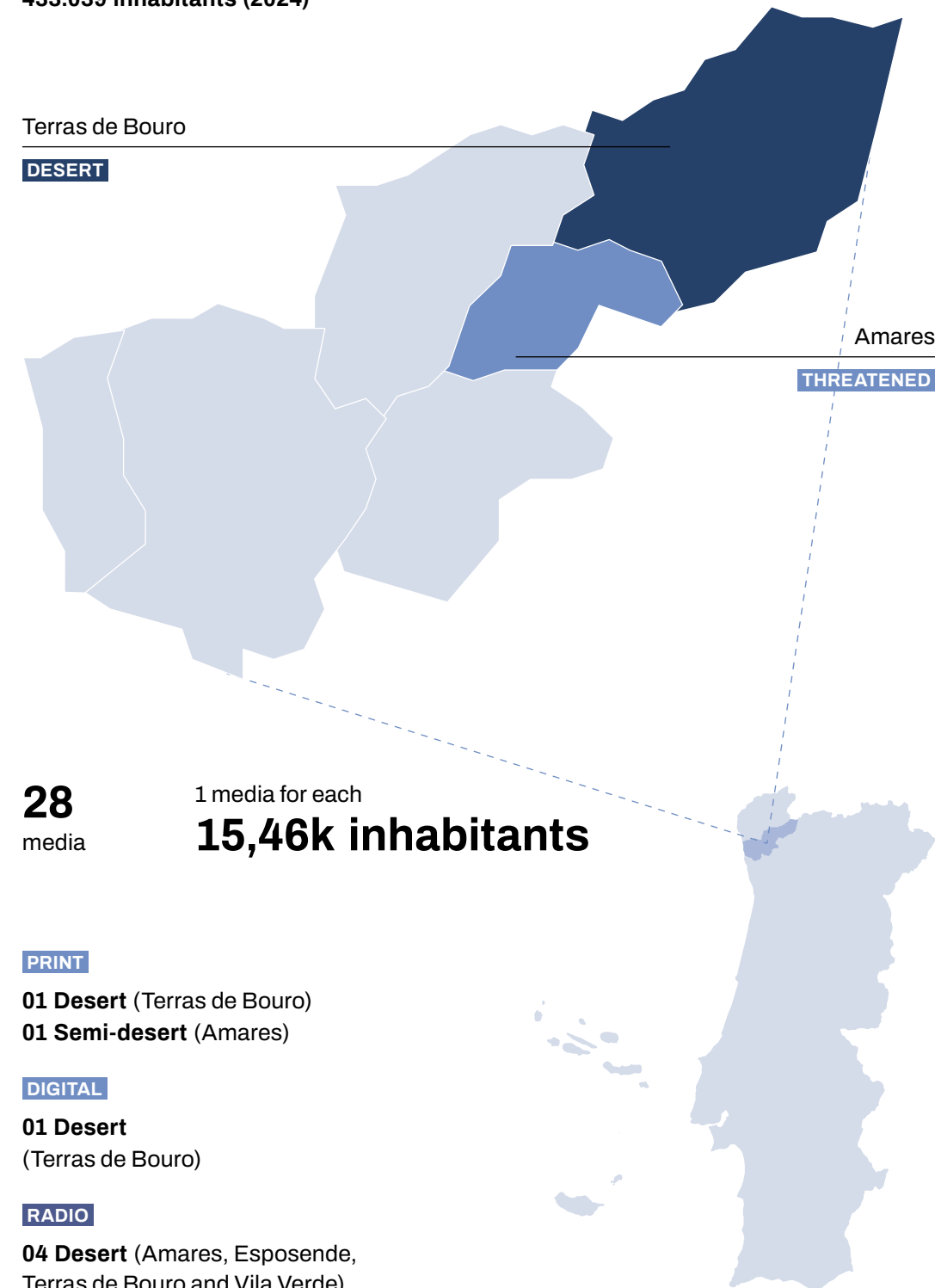
Alto Minho

10 counties
234.645 inhabitants (2024)



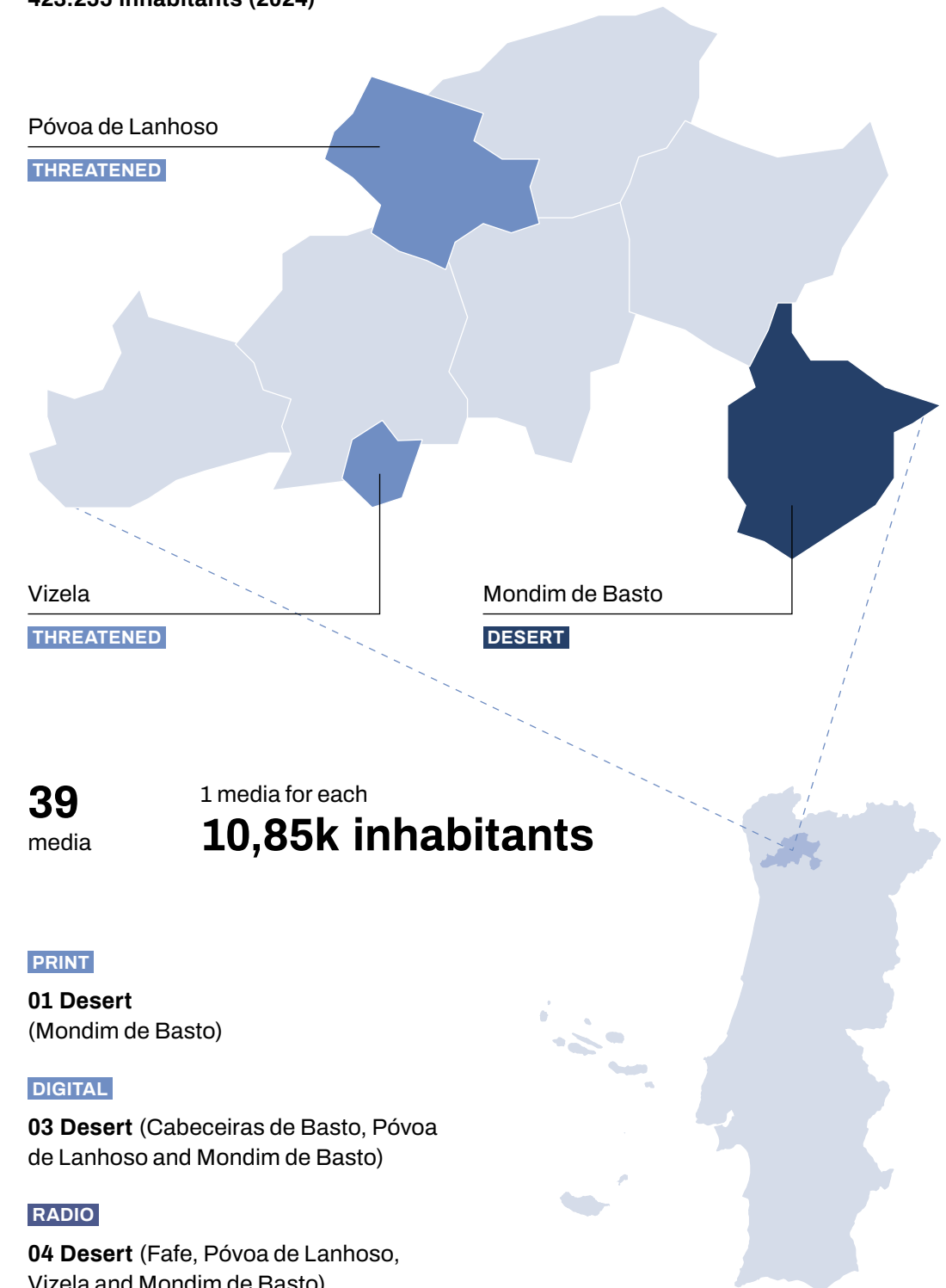
Cávado

06 counties
433.039 inhabitants (2024)



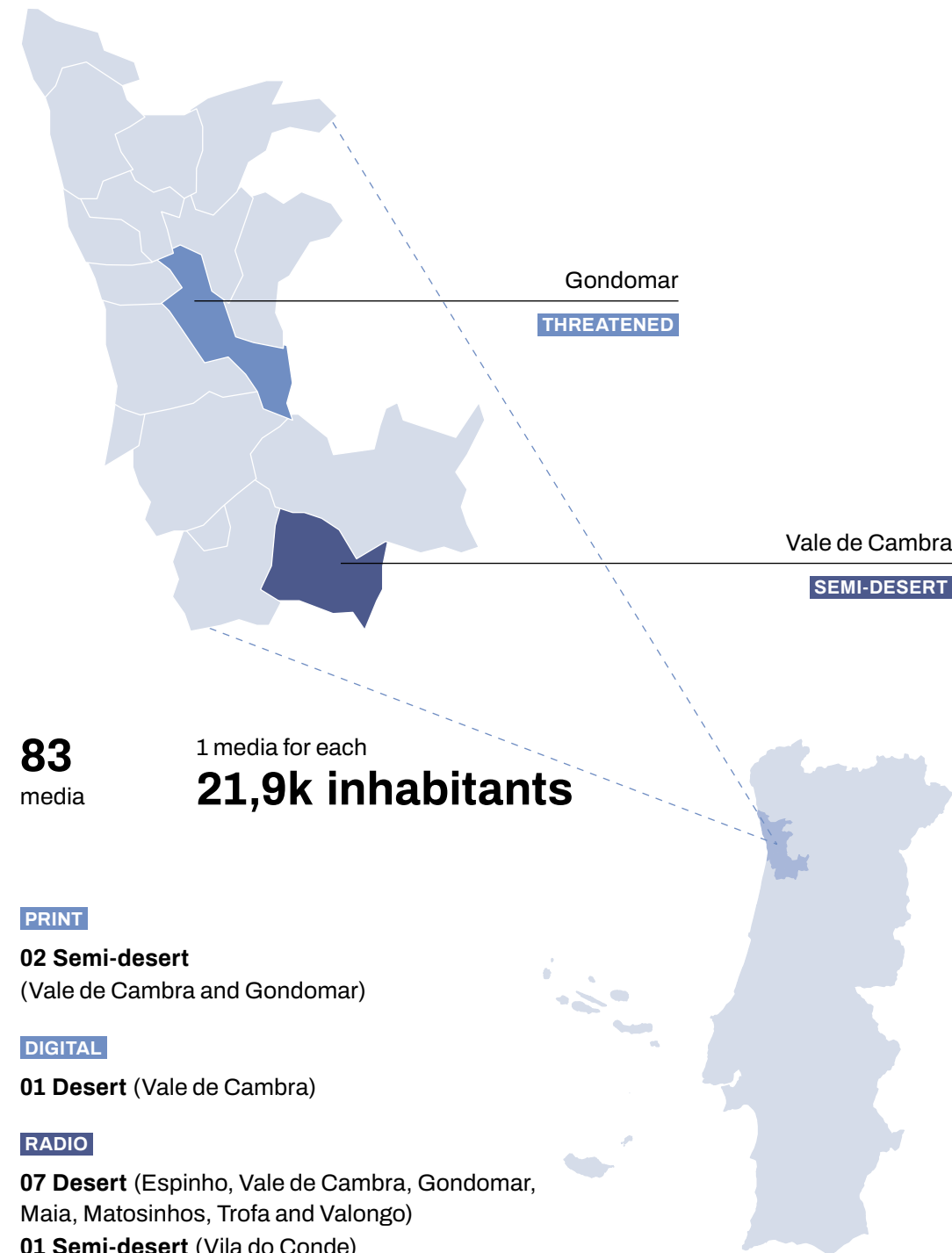
Ave

08 counties
423.255 inhabitants (2024)



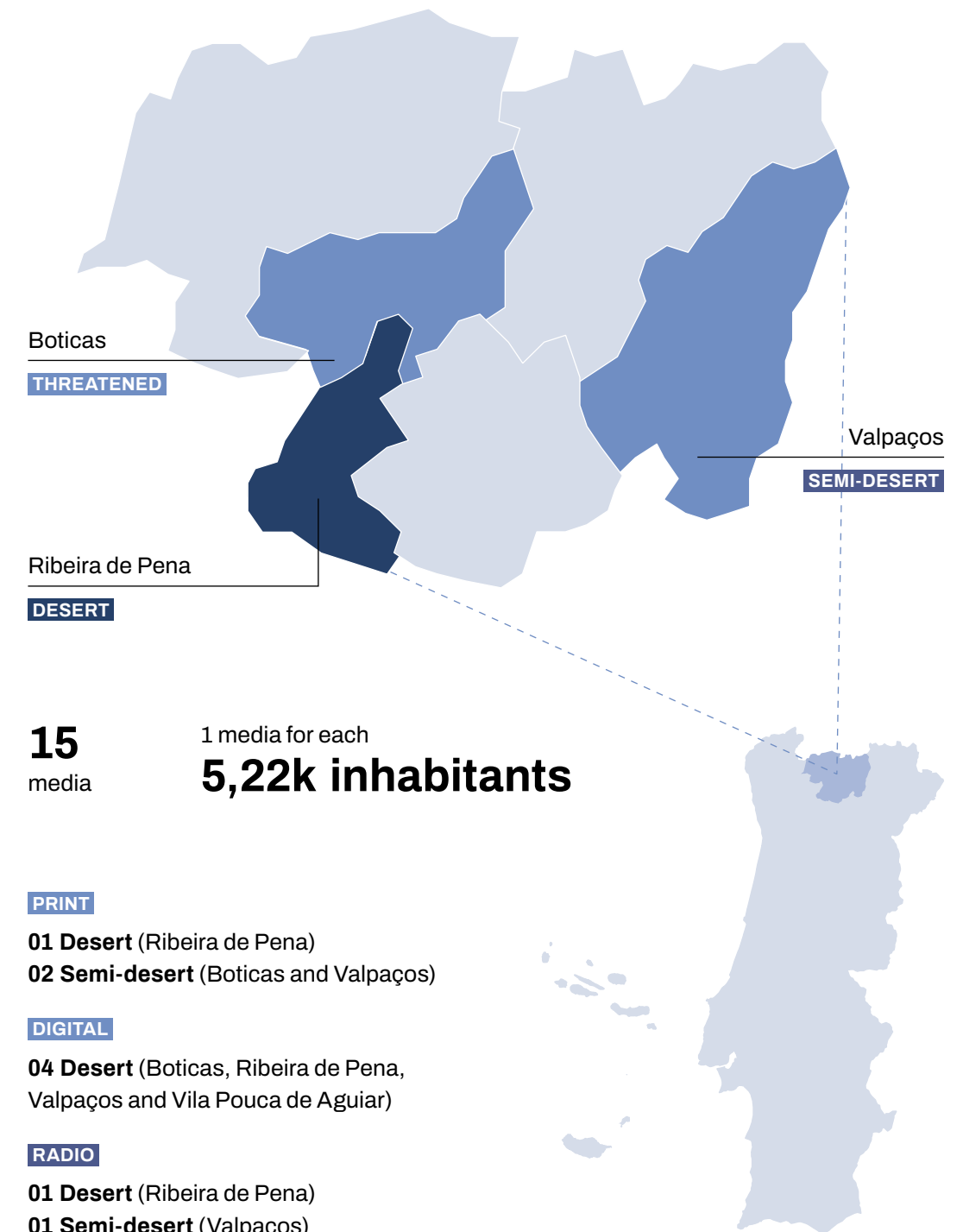
AM Porto

17 counties
1.818.217 inhabitants (2024)



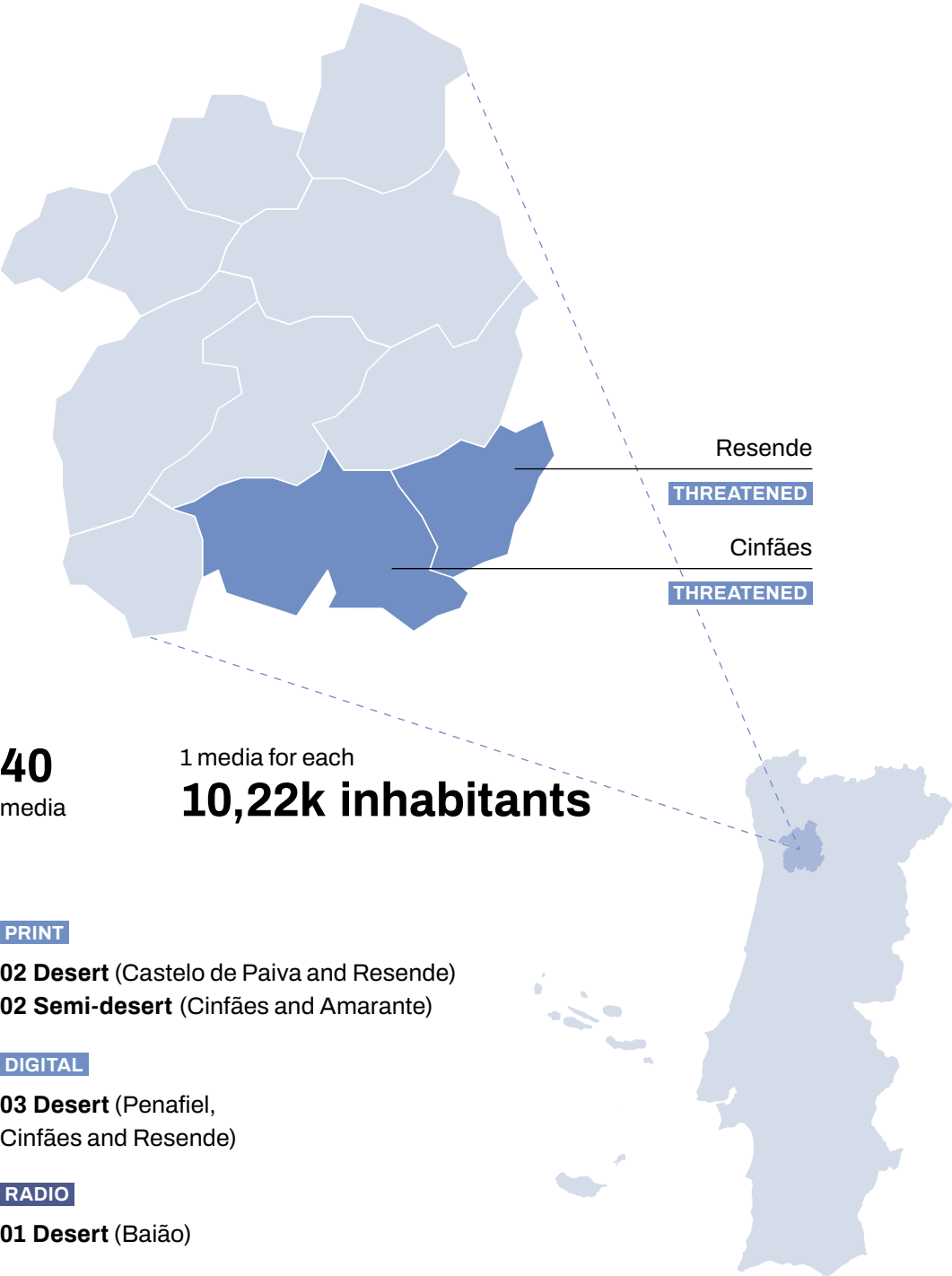
Alto Tâmega

06 counties
78.445 inhabitants (2024)



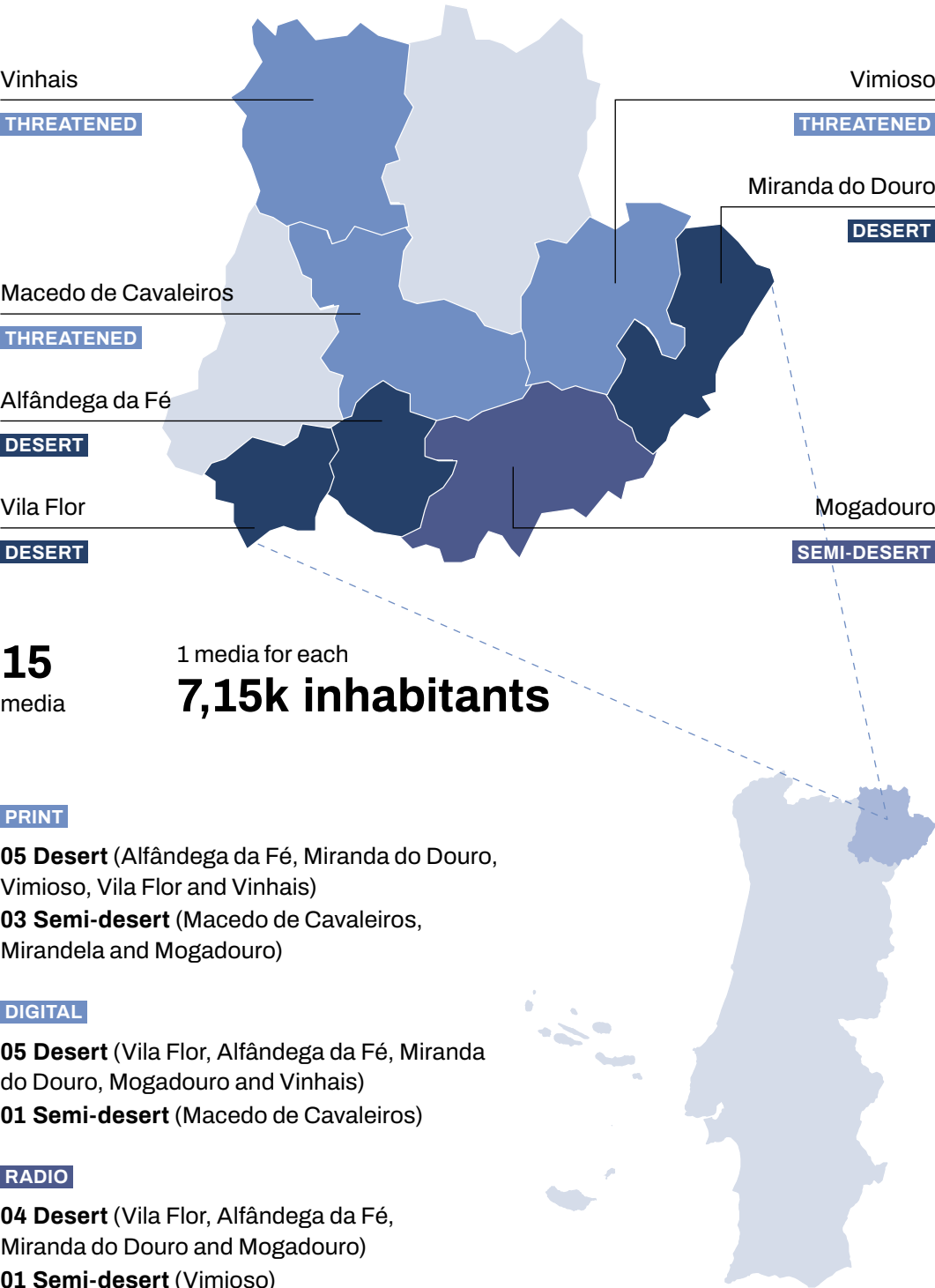
Tâmega e Sousa

11 counties
409.078 inhabitants (2024)



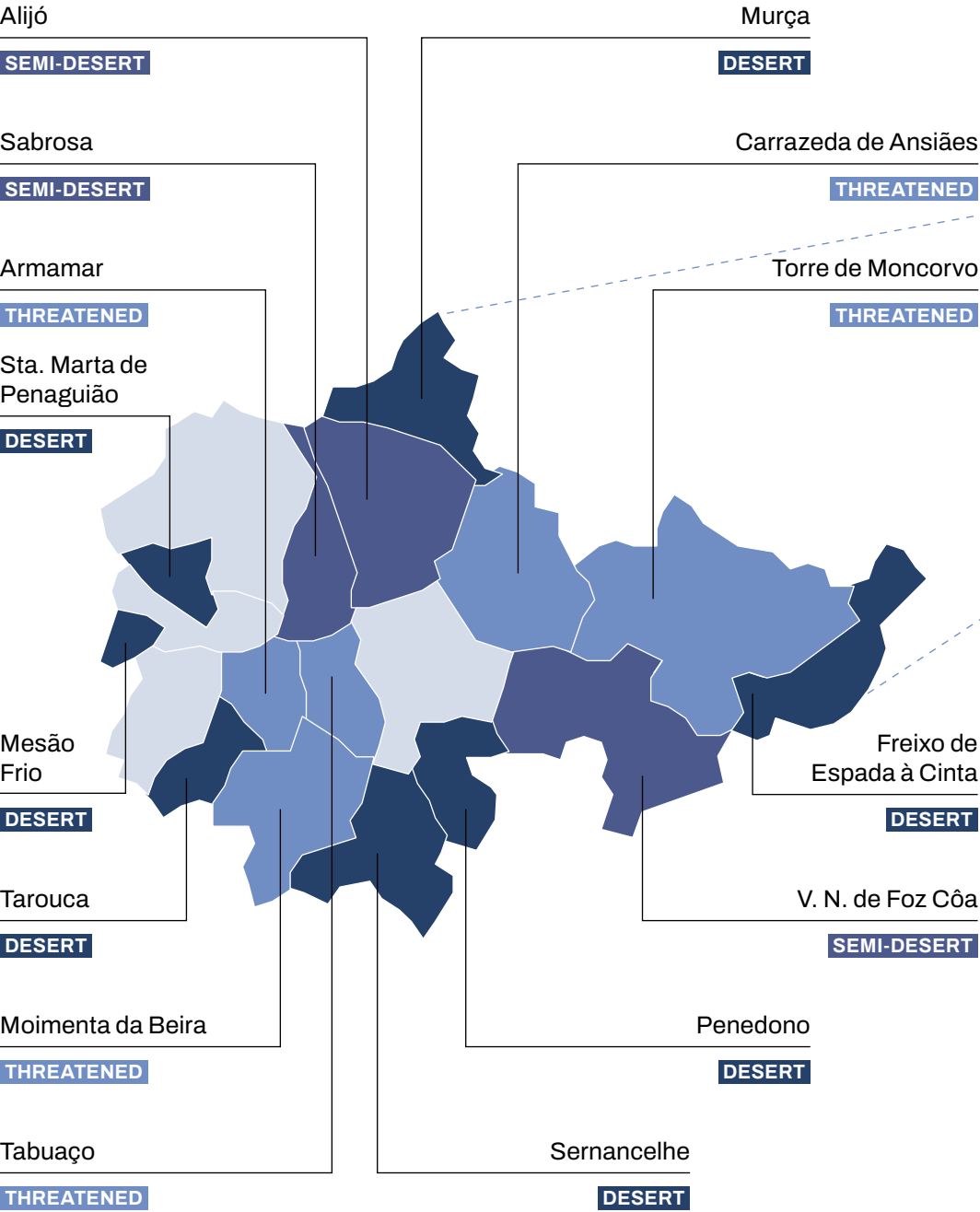
Trás-os-montes

09 counties
107.296 inhabitants (2024)



Douro

19 counties
183.867 inhabitants (2024)



21
media

1 media for each
8,7k
inhabitants

PRINT

12 Desert (Freixo de Espada à Cinta, Torre de Moncorvo, Alijó, Mesão Frio, Murça, Sabrosa, Santa Marta de Penaguião, Armamar, Penedono, Sernancelhe, Tabuaço and Tarouca)
04 Semi-desert (Carrazeda de Ansiães, Moimenta da Beira, São João da Pesqueira and Vila Nova de Foz Côa)

DIGITAL

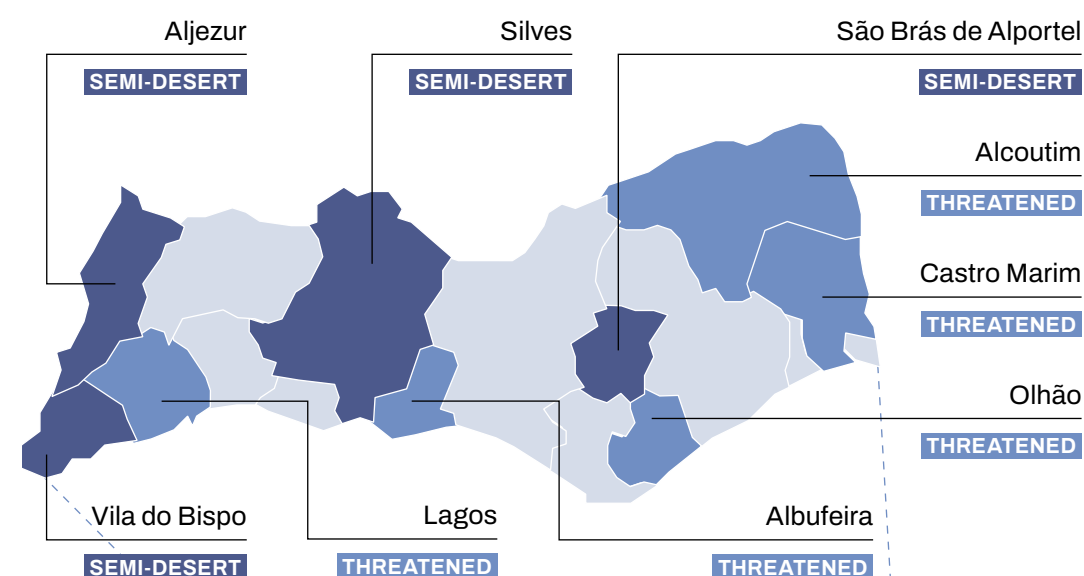
16 Desert (Carrazeda de Ansiães, Freixo de Espada à Cinta, Torre de Moncorvo, Vila Nova de Foz Côa, Alijó, Mesão Frio, Murça, Sabrosa, Santa Marta de Penaguião, Armamar, Lamego, Moimenta da Beira, Penedono, Sernancelhe, Tabuaço and Tarouca)

RADIO

10 Desert (Freixo de Espada à Cinta, Vila Nova de Foz Côa, Mesão Frio, Murça, Peso da Régua, Santa Marta de Penaguião, Penedono, Sernancelhe, Tarouca, Carrazeda de Ansiães)
02 Semi-desert (Alijó and Sabrosa)

Algarve

16 counties
492.747 inhabitants (2024)



50
media

1 media for each
9,85k inhabitants

PRINT

06 Desert (Albufeira, Alcoutim, Castro Marim, Olhão, Portimão and Vila do Bispo)

07 Semi-desert (Faro, Aljezur, Lagos, Monchique, Silves, São Brás de Alportel and Loulé)

DIGITAL

07 Desert (Albufeira, Alcoutim, Aljezur, Castro Marim, São Brás de Alportel, Silves and Vila do Bispo)

RADIO

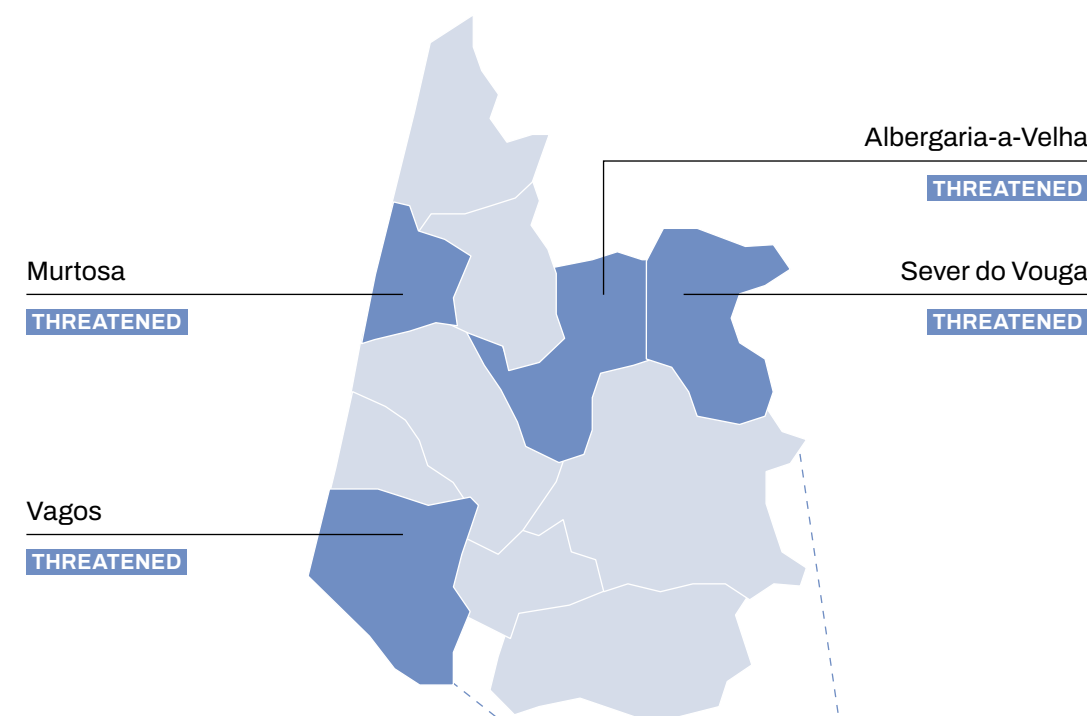
05 Desert (Aljezur, Lagos, Olhão, São Brás de Alportel and Silves)

03 Semi-desert (Vila do Bispo)



Região de Aveiro

11 counties
392.257 inhabitants (2024)



55
media

1 media for each
7,13k inhabitants

PRINT

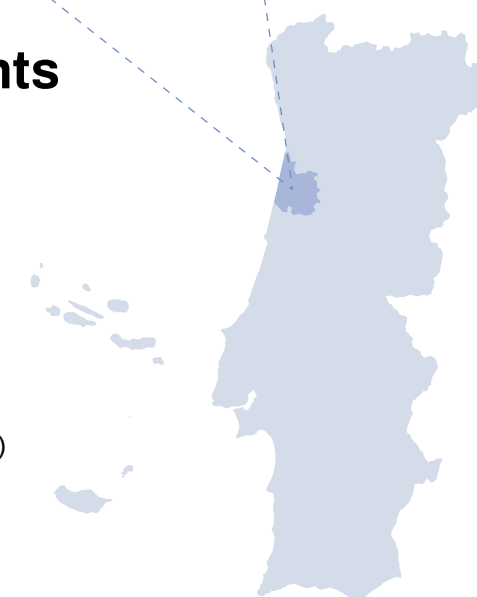
03 Semi-desert
(Anadia, Murtosa and Vagos)

DIGITAL

04 Desert
(Estarreja, Murtosa, Sever do Vouga and Vagos)

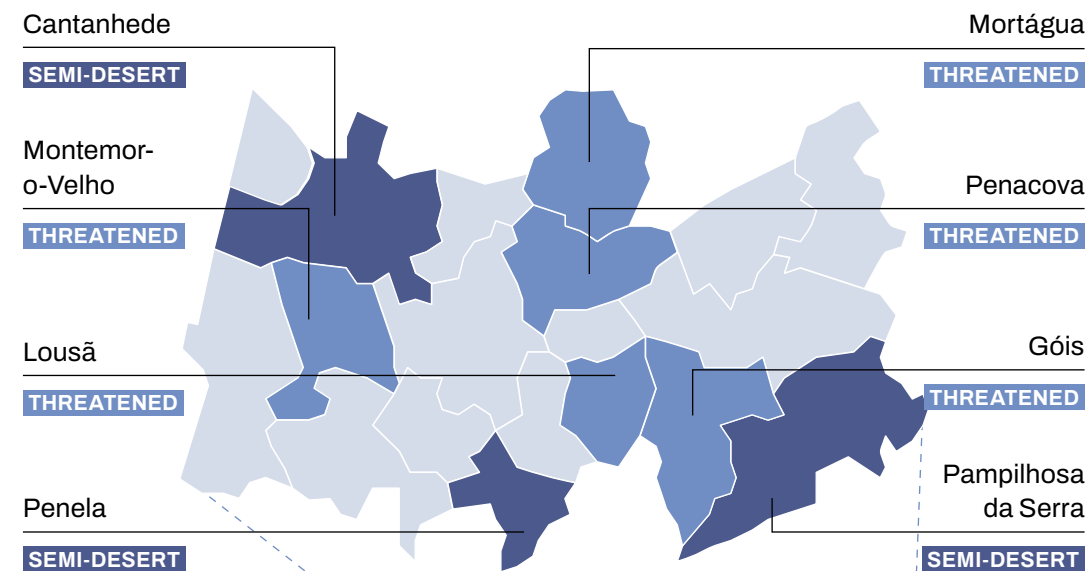
RADIO

03 Desert
(Aveiro, Oliveira do Bairro and Sever do Vouga)



Região de Coimbra

19 counties
452.559 inhabitants (2024)



43 media
1 media for each
10,52k inhabitants

PRINT

05 Desert (Montemor-o-Velho, Pampilhosa da Serra, Penacova, Penela and Vila Nova de Poiares)
03 Semi-desert (Cantanhede, Miranda do Corvo and Figueira da Foz)

DIGITAL

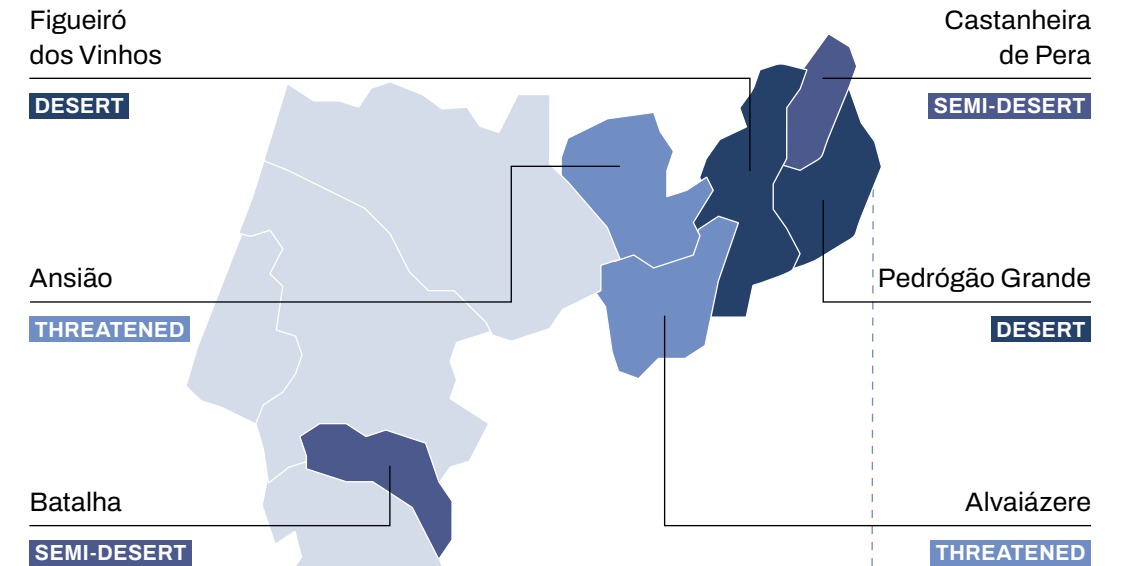
06 Desert (Cantanhede, Góis, Montemor-o-Velho, Pampilhosa da Serra, Penela and Mortágua)

RADIO

07 Desert (Cantanhede, Góis, Lousã, Mira, Penacova, Tábua and Mortágua)
02 Semi-desert (Pampilhosa da Serra and Penela)

Região de Leiria

10 counties
301.764 inhabitants (2024)



29 media
1 media for each
10,40k inhabitants

PRINT

01 Desert (Pedrogão Grande)
03 Semi-desert (Alvaiázere, Castanheira de Pera and Ansião)

DIGITAL

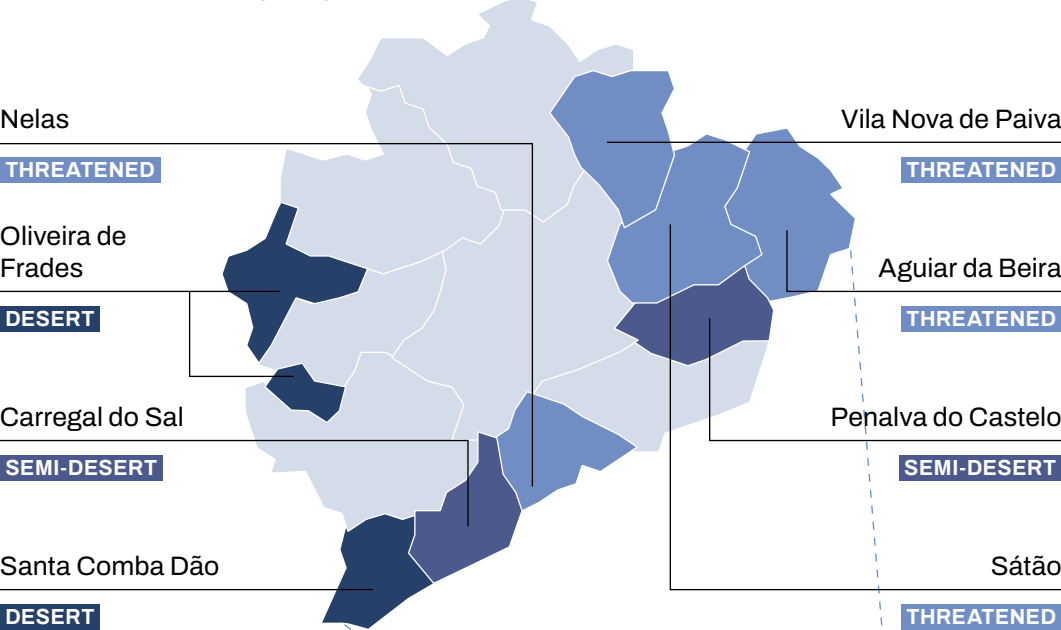
03 Desert (Castanheira de Pera, Figueiró dos Vinhos and Pedrogão Grande)
02 Semi-desert (Alvaiázere and Ansião)

RADIO

03 Desert (Castanheira de Pera, Figueiró dos Vinhos and Pedrogão Grande)

Viseu Dão-Lafões

13 counties
233.633 inhabitants (2024)



36
media

1 media for each
6,48k inhabitants

PRINT

03 Desert (Carregal do Sal, Oliveira de Frades and Santa Comba Dão)
05 Semi-desert (Nelas, Penalva do Castelo, Sátão, Vila Nova de Paiva and Aguiar da Beira)

DIGITAL

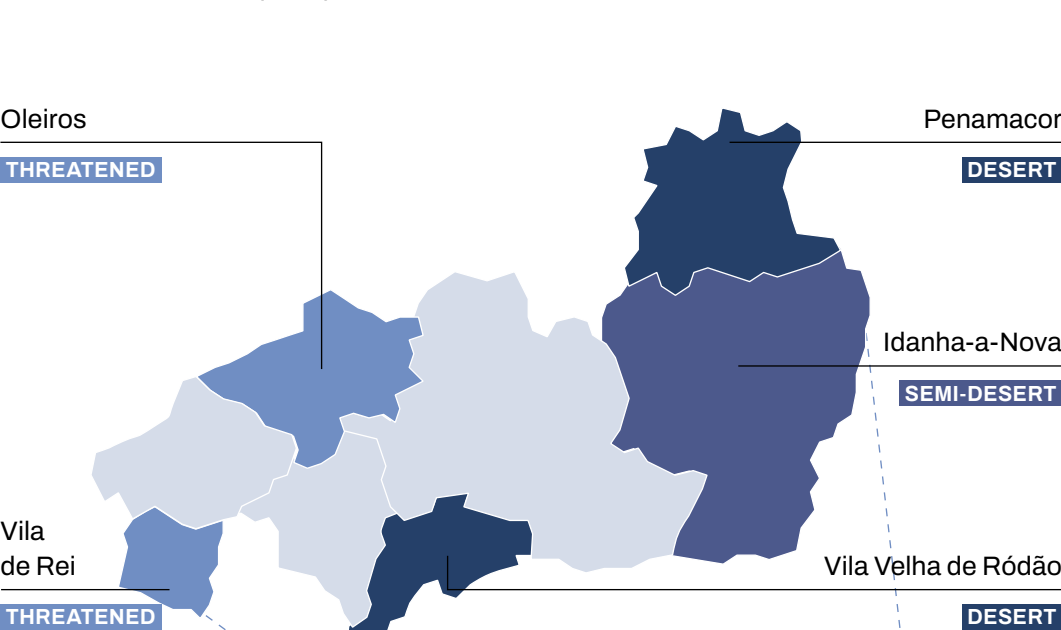
10 Desert (Carregal do Sal, Castro Daire, Nelas, Oliveira de Frades, Penalva do Castel, Santa Comba Dão, Sátão, Vila Nova de Paiva, Aguiar da Beira and São Pedro do Sul)
01 Semi-desert (Tondela)

RADIO

05 Desert (Aguiar da Beira, Mangualde, Oliveira de Frades, Penalva do Castelo and Santa Comba Dão)
01 Semi-desert (Carregal do Sal)

Beira Baixa

08 counties
100.733 inhabitants (2024)



19
media

1 media for each
5,30k inhabitants

PRINT

03 Desert (Penamacor, Vila de Rei and Vila Velha de Ródão)
03 Semi-desert (Idanha-a-Nova, Proença-a-Nova and Oleiros)

DIGITAL

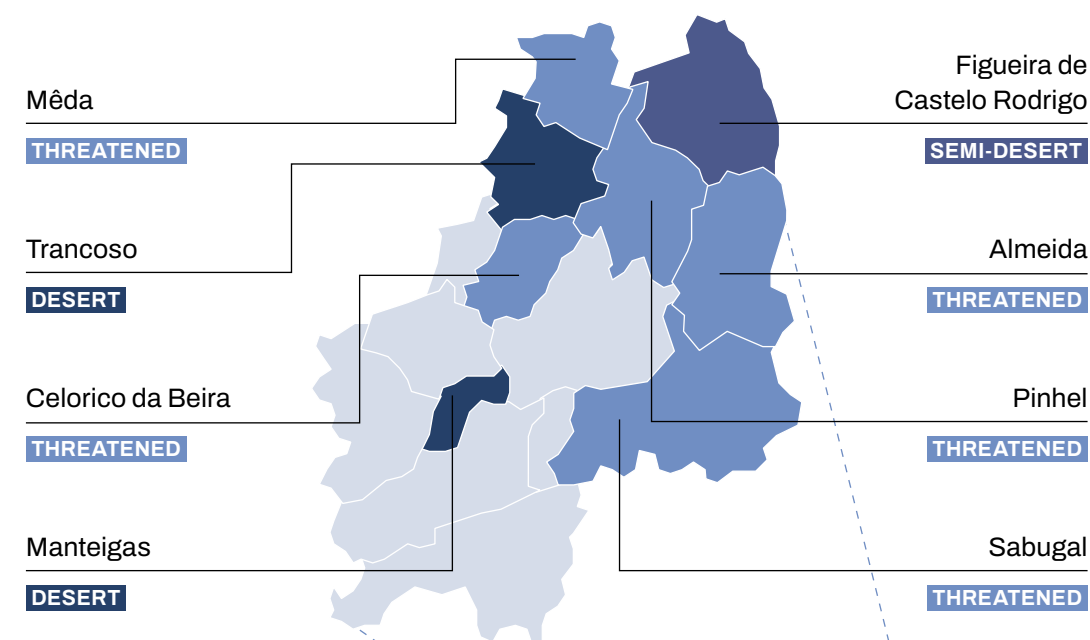
04 Desert (Idanha-a-Nova, Penamacor, Sertã and Vila Velha de Ródão)
01 Semi-desert (Vila de Rei)

RADIO

06 Desert (Idanha-a-Nova, Oleiros, Penamacor, Proença-a-Nova, Vila Velha de Ródão and Sertã)
01 Semi-desert (Vila de Rei)

Beiras e Serra da Estrela

16 counties
236.614 inhabitants (2024)



39
media
1 media for each
6,06k inhabitants

PRINT

05 Desert (Celorico da Beira, Manteigas, Mêda, Pinhel and Trancoso)

05 Semi-desert (Almeida, Sabugal, Belmonte, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo and Seia)

DIGITAL

06 Desert (Almeida, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, Manteigas, Mêda, Pinhel and Trancoso)

01 Semi-desert (Gouveia)

RADIO

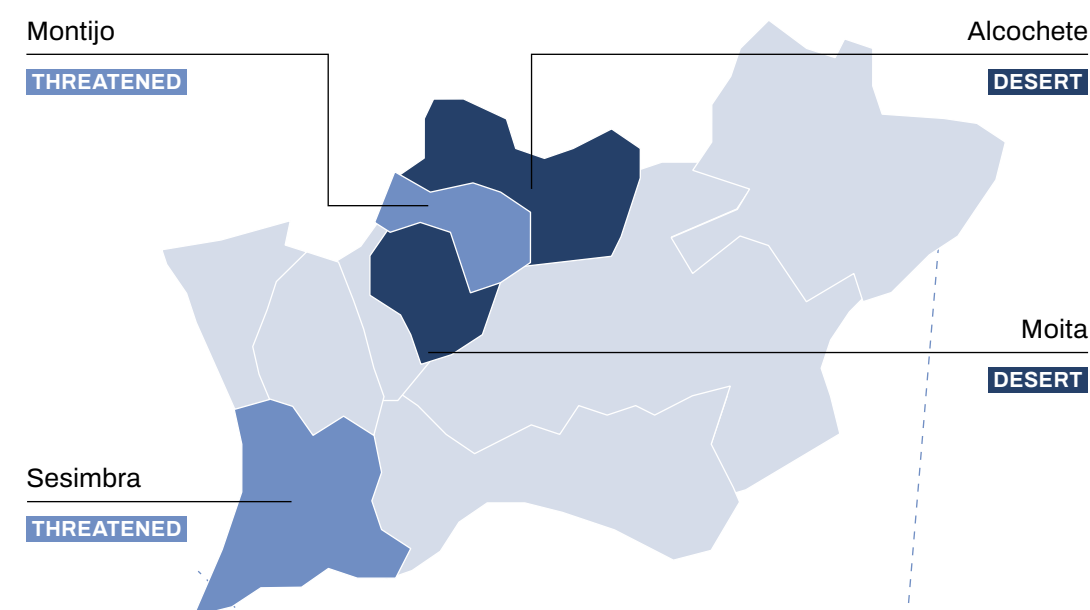
04 Desert (Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, Manteigas, Sabugal and Trancoso)

01 Semi-desert (Seia)



Península de Setúbal

09 counties
848.507 inhabitants (2024)



29
media
1 media for each
29,25k inhabitants

PRINT

04 Desert (Alcochete, Almada, Moita and Montijo)

02 Semi-desert (Barreiro and Sesimbra)

DIGITAL

03 Desert (Alcochete, Moita and Seixal)

01 Semi-desert (Sesimbra)

RADIO

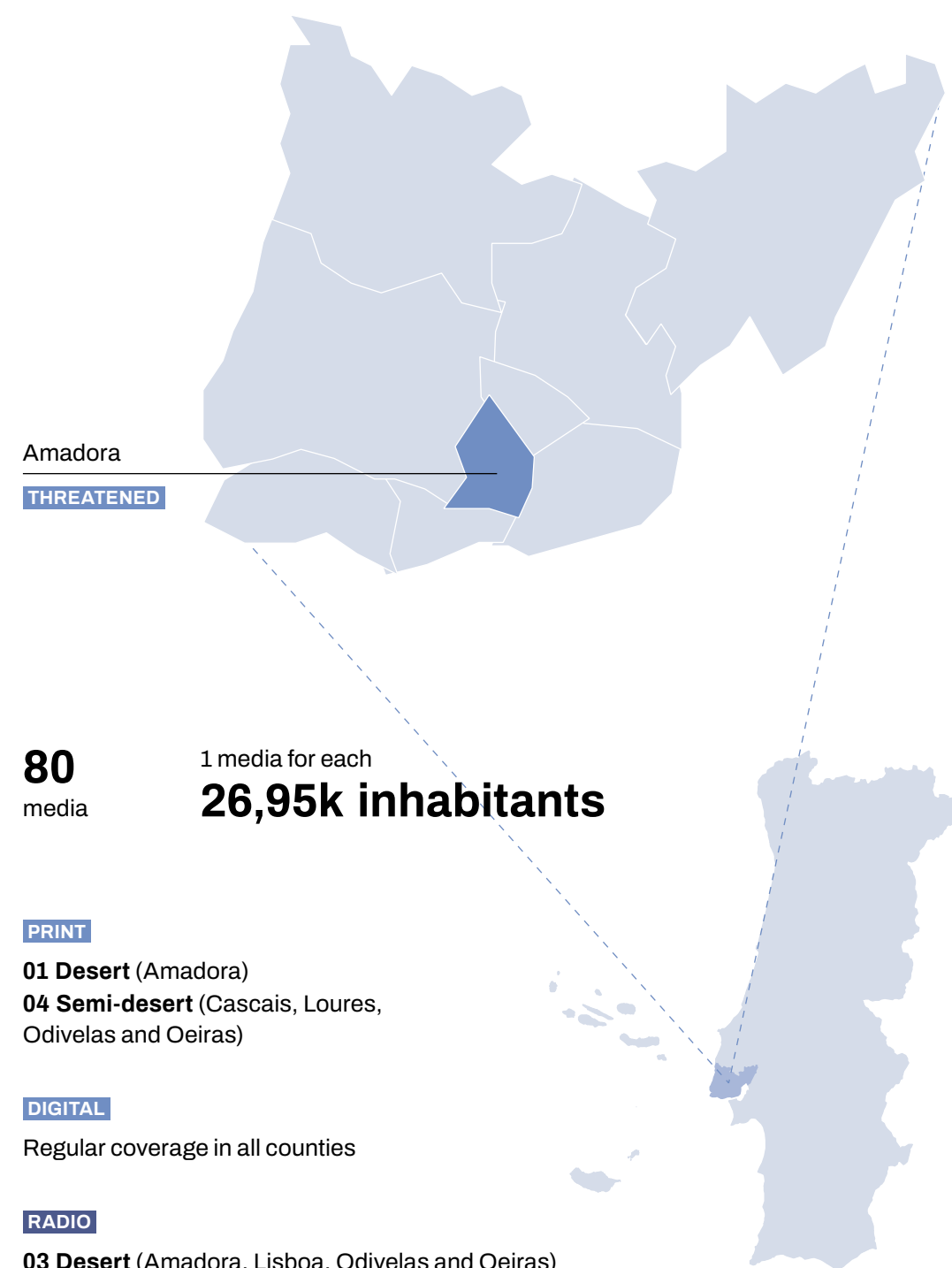
03 Desert (Alcochete, Almada, Moita)

02 Semi-desert (Montijo and Palmela)



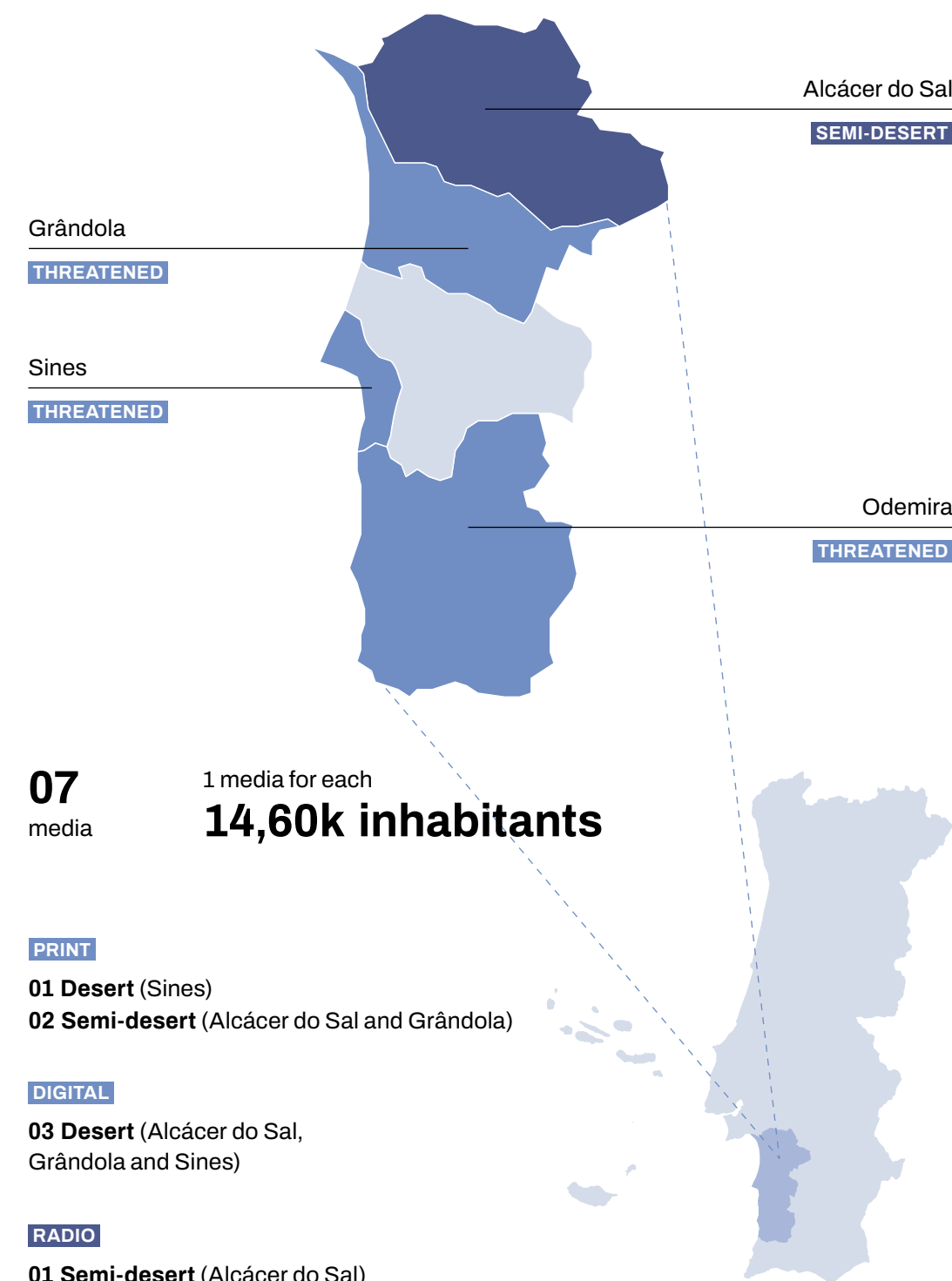
Grande Lisboa

09 counties
2.156.612 inhabitants (2024)



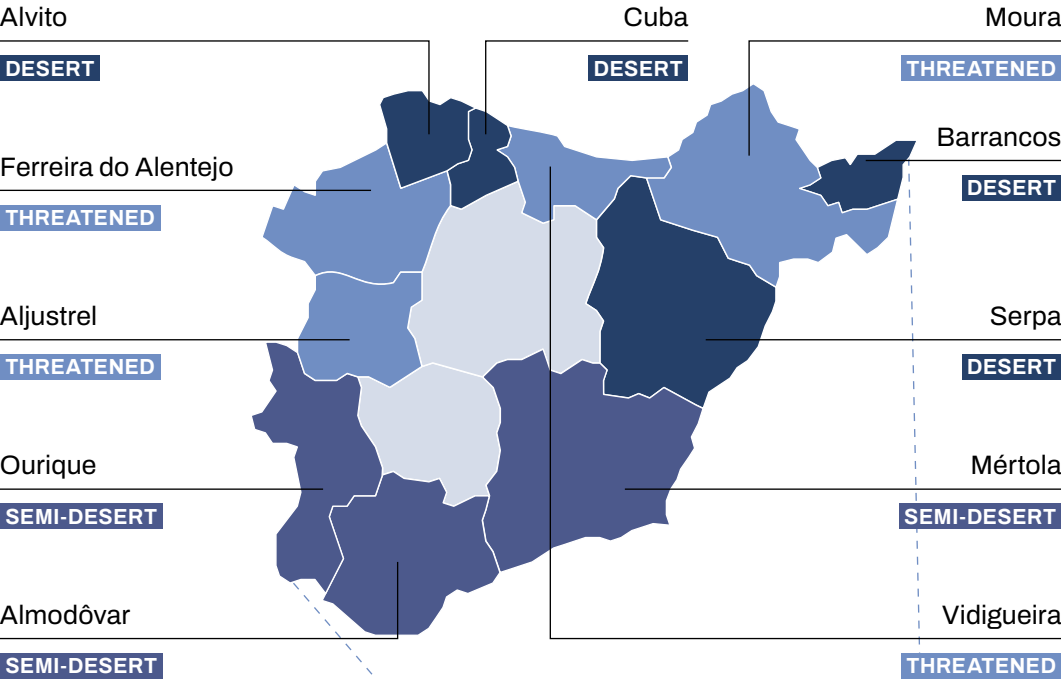
Alentejo Litoral

05 counties
102.218 inhabitants (2024)



Baixo Alentejo

13 counties
115.680 inhabitants (2024)



16
media

1 media for each
7,23k inhabitants

PRINT

10 Desert (Aljustrel, Almodôvar, Alvito, Barrancos, Cuba, Ferreira do Alentejo, Mértola, Ourique, Serpa and Vidigueira)
01 Semi-desert (Moura)

DIGITAL

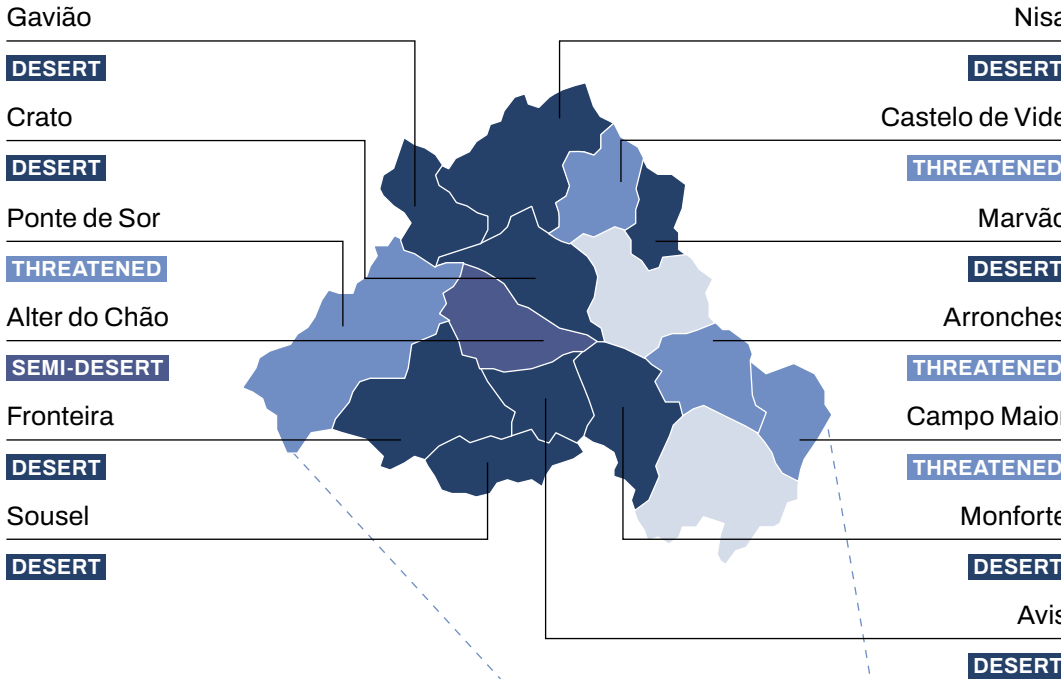
10 Desert (Aljustrel, Almodôvar, Alvito, Barrancos, Cuba, Ferreira do Alentejo, Mértola, Ourique, Serpa and Vidigueira)

RADIO

07 Desert (Alvito, Barrancos, Cuba and Serpa, Almodôvar, Mértola and Ourique)

Alto Alentejo

15 counties
103.566 inhabitants (2024)



09
media

1 media for each
11,50k inhabitants

PRINT

10 Desert (Avis, Campo Maior, Castelo de Vide, Crato, Fronteira, Gavião, Marvão, Monforte, Nisa and Sousel)
02 Semi-desert (Alter do Chão e Arronches)

DIGITAL

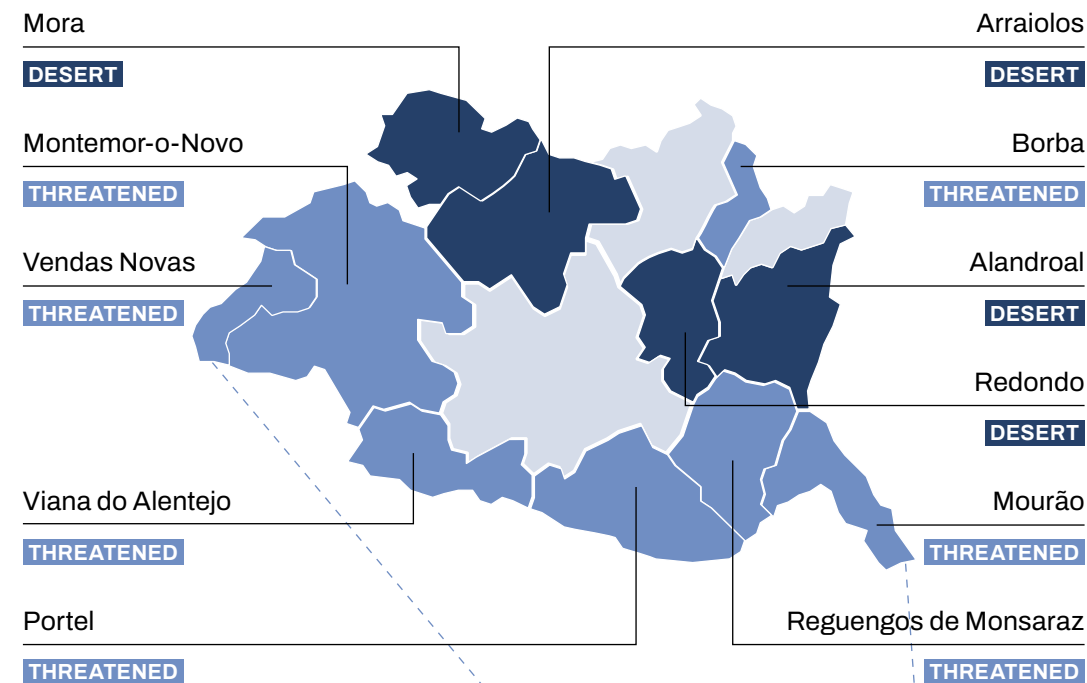
11 Desert (Alter do Chão, Avis, Campo Maior, Crato, Fronteira, Gavião, Marvão, Monforte, Nisa, Ponte de Sor, Sousel)

RADIO

11 Desert (Alter do Chão, Arronches, Avis, Castelo de Vide, Crato, Fronteira, Gavião, Marvão, Monforte, Nisa and Sousel)
01 Semi-desert (Ponte de Sor)

Alentejo Central

14 counties
153.430 inhabitants (2024)



37
media
1 media for each
4,14k inhabitants

PRINT

10 Desert (Alandroal, Arraiolos, Borba, Mora, Mourão, Portel, Redondo, Vendas Novas, Viana do Alentejo, and Vila Viçosa)
03 Semi-desert (Reguengos de Monsaraz, Estremoz e Montemor-o-Novo)

DIGITAL

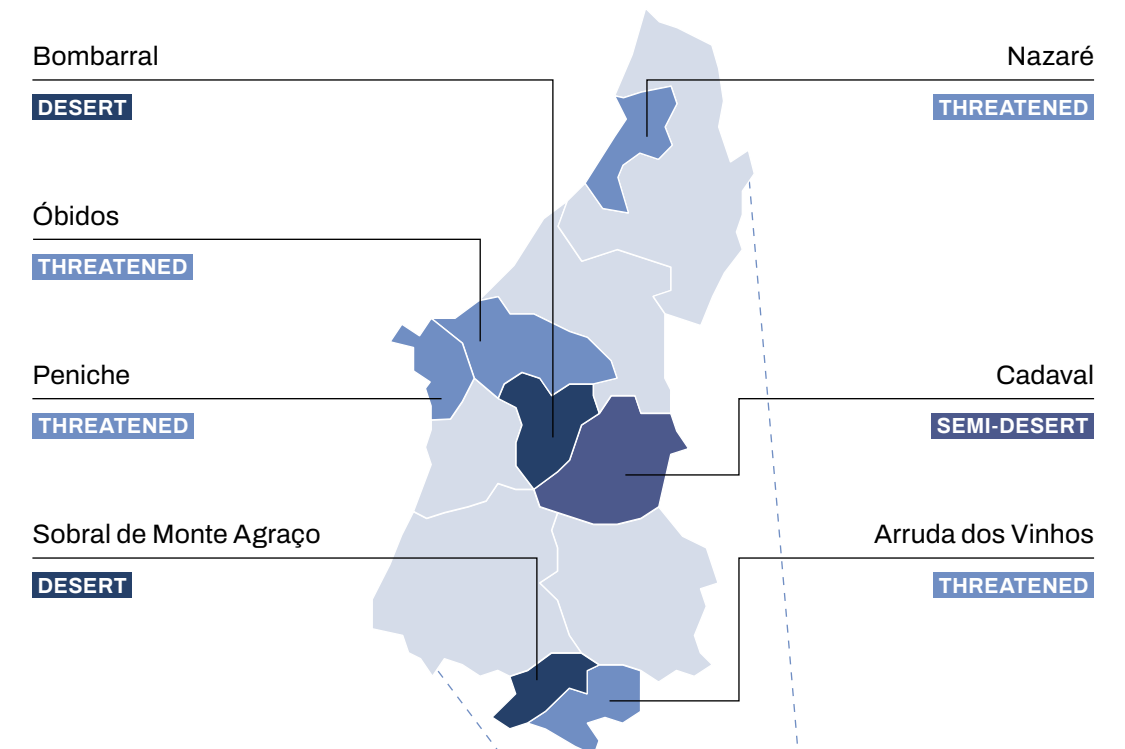
11 Desert (Alandroal, Arraiolos, Borba, Montemor-o-Novo, Mora, Mourão, Portel, Redondo, Reguengos de Monsaraz, Vendas Novas and Viana do Alentejo)

RADIO

04 Desert (Alandroal, Arraiolos, Mora and Redondo)

Oeste

12 counties
395.474 inhabitants (2024)



32
media
1 media for each
12,35k inhabitants

PRINT

06 Desert (Bombarral, Nazaré, Óbidos, Arruda dos Vinhos, Cadaval and Sobral de Monte Agraço)
01 Semi-desert (Peniche)

DIGITAL

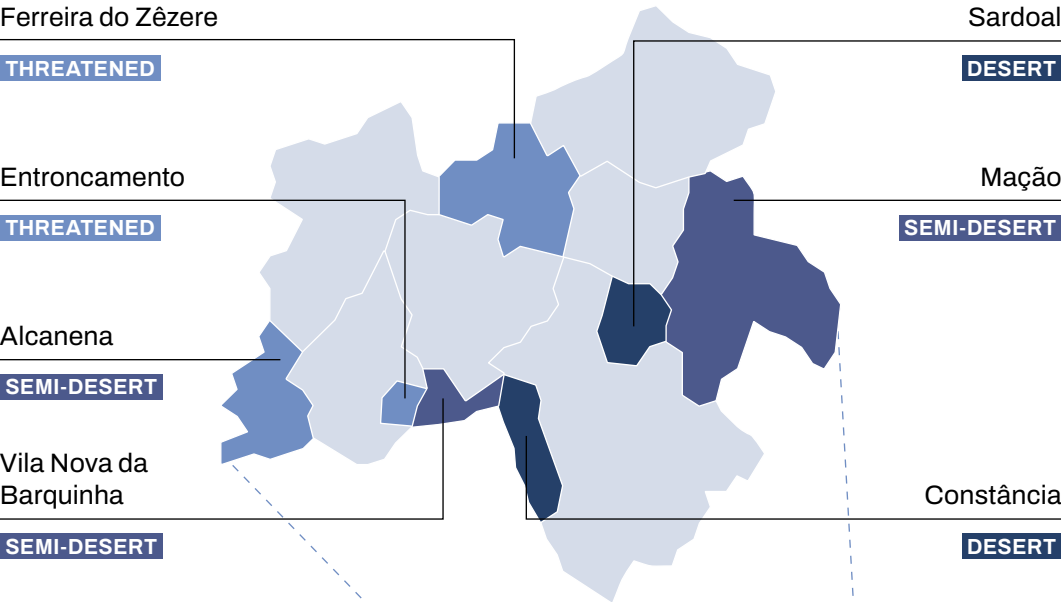
07 Desert (Bombarral, Nazaré, Óbidos, Peniche, Arruda dos Vinhos, Cadaval and Sobral de Monte Agraço)

RADIO

02 Desert (Bombarral and Sobral de Monte Agraço)
02 Semi-desert (Caldas da Rainha and Cadaval)

Medio Tejo

11 counties
218.467 inhabitants (2024)



29
media

1 media for each
7,53k inhabitants

PRINT

04 Desert (Constância, Entroncamento, Ferreira do Zêzere and Sardoal)

04 Semi-desert (Mação, Vila Nova da Barquinha, Alcanena and Abrantes)

DIGITAL

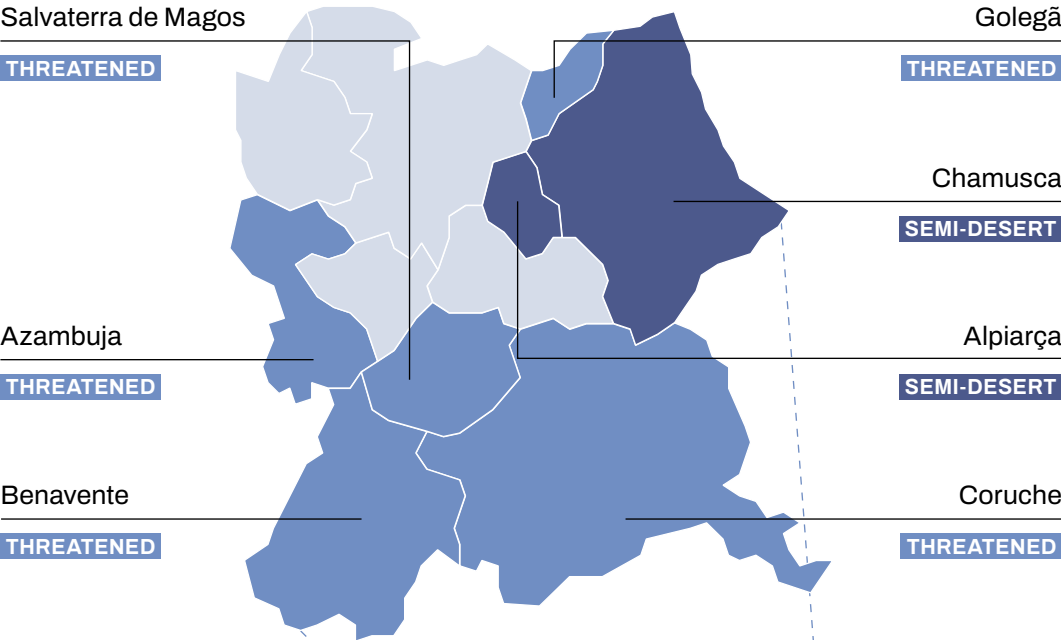
08 Desert (Alcanena, Constância, Entroncamento, Ferreira do Zêzere, Mação, Sardoal, Torres Novas and Vila Nova da Barquinha)

RADIO

05 Desert (Alcanena, Constância, Mação, Sardoal and Vila Nova da Barquinha)

Lezíria do Tejo

11 counties
251.374 inhabitants (2024)



28
media

1 media for each
8,97k inhabitants

PRINT

06 Desert (Benavente, Chamusca, Coruche, Golegã, Rio Maior and Salvaterra de Magos)

03 Semi-desert (Alpiarça, Cartaxo and Azambuja)

DIGITAL

05 Desert (Alpiarça, Benavente, Chamusca, Golegã and Salvaterra de Magos)

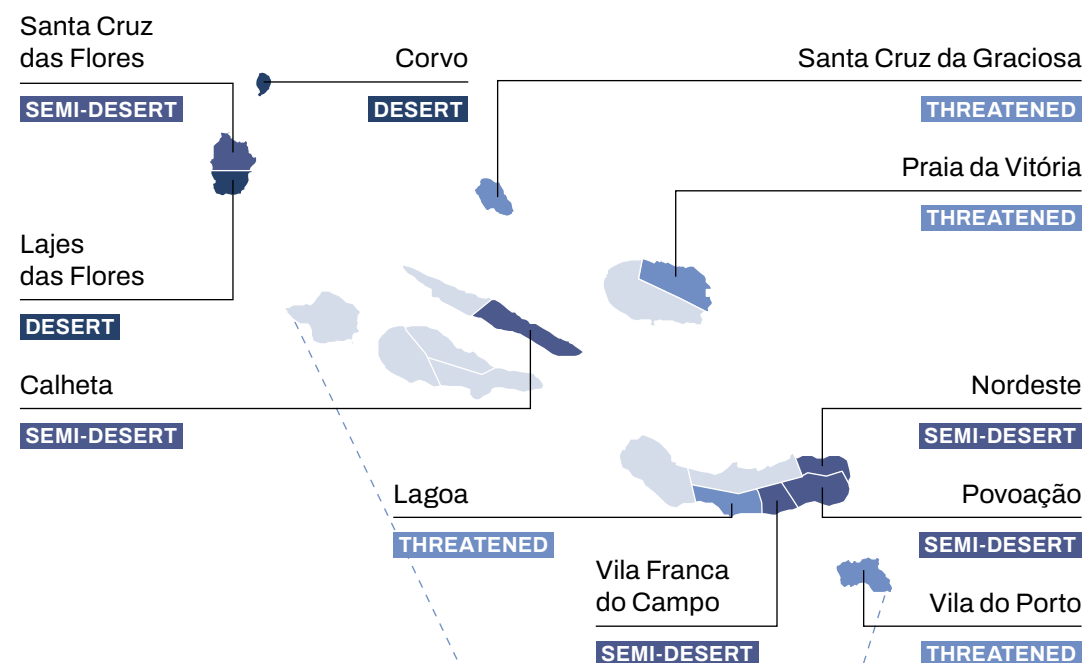
RADIO

03 Desert (Alpiarça, Coruche and Santarém)

02 Semi-desert (Azambuja and Chamusca)

Açores

19 counties
241.718 inhabitants (2024)



43 media
1 media for each
5,62k inhabitants

PRINT

08 Desert (Calheta, Corvo, Lajes das Flores, Nordeste, Povoação, Santa Cruz da Graciosa, Santa Cruz das Flores and Velas)

03 Semi-desert (Vila do Porto, Vila Franca do Campo and Lagoa)

DIGITAL

13 Desert (Calheta, Corvo, Lajes das Flores, Lajes do Pico, Madalena, Nordeste, Povoação, Praia da Vitória, Santa Cruz da Graciosa, Santa Cruz das Flores, São Roque do Pico, Vila do Porto and Vila Franca do Campo)

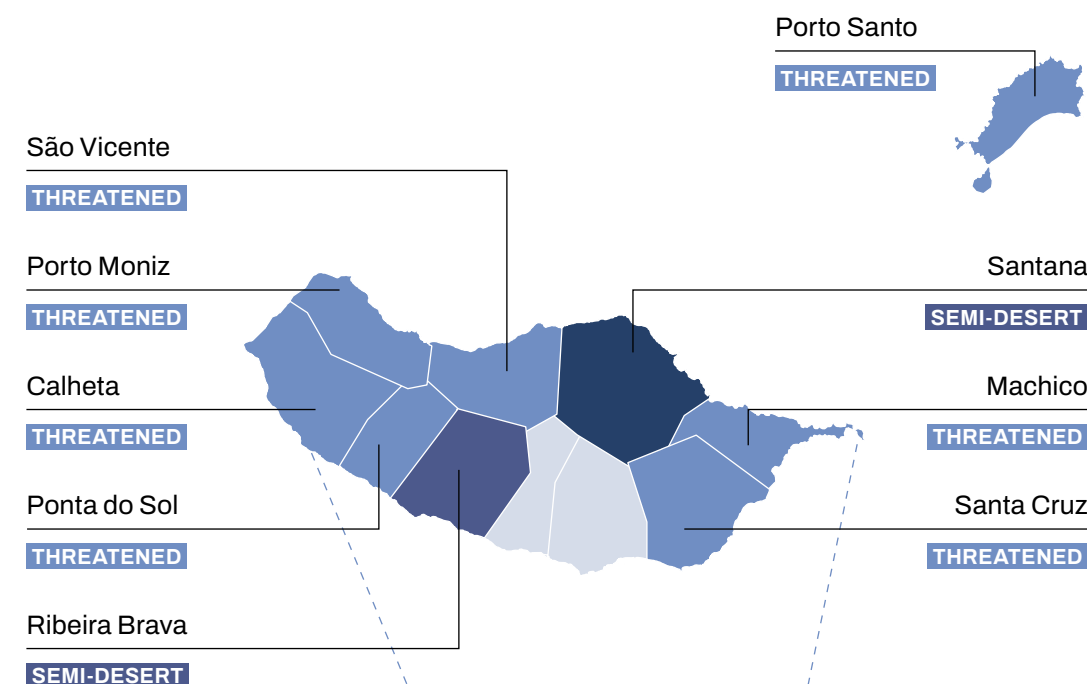
RADIO

02 Desert (Corvo, Lajes das Flores)

07 Semi-desert (Calheta, Lagoa, Nordeste, Povoação, Praia da Vitória, Santa Cruz das Flores and Vila Franca do Campo)

Madeira

11 counties
259.440 inhabitants (2024)



25 media
1 media for each
10,37k inhabitants

PRINT

09 Desert (Calheta, Machico, Ponta do Sol, Porto Moniz, Porto Santo, Ribeira Brava, Santa Cruz, Santana and São Vicente)

DIGITAL

09 Desert (Calheta, Câmara de Lobos, Machico, Ponta do Sol, Porto Moniz, Ribeira Brava, Santa Cruz, Santana and São Vicente)

RADIO

02 Semi-desert (Ribeira Brava and Santana)

Municipalities in news deserts

1. Alandroal	30. Penamacor
2. Alcochete	31. Penedono
3. Alfândega da Fé	32. Redondo
4. Alvito	33. Ribeira de Pena
5. Arraiolos	34. Santa Comba Dão
6. Avis	35. Santa Marta de Penaguião
7. Barrancos	36. Sardoal
8. Bombarral	37. Sernancelhe
9. Constância	38. Serpa
10. Corvo	39. Sobral de Monte Agraço
11. Crato	40. Sousel
12. Cuba	41. Tarouca
13. Figueiró dos Vinhos	42. Terras de Bouro
14. Freixo de Espada à Cinta	43. Trancoso
15. Fronteira	44. Vila Flor
16. Gavião	45. Vila Velha de Ródão
17. Lajes das Flores	
18. Manteigas	
19. Marvão	
20. Mesão Frio	
21. Miranda do Douro	
22. Moita	
23. Mondim de Basto	
24. Monforte	
25. Mora	
26. Murça	
27. Nisa	
28. Oliveira de Frades	
29. Pedrógão Grande	

Municipalities in semi-desert

1. Alcácer do Sal	28. Santa Cruz das Flores
2. Alcanena	29. Santana
3. Alijó	30. São Brás de Alportel
4. Aljezur	31. Silves
5. Almodôvar	32. Vale de Cambra
6. Alpiarça	33. Valença
7. Alter do Chão	34. Valpaços
8. Batalha	35. Vila do Bispo
9. Cadaval	36. Vila Franca do Campo
10. Calheta (Açores)	37. Vila Nova da Barquinha
11. Cantanhede	38. Vila Nova de Foz Côa
12. Carregal do Sal	
13. Castanheira de Pera	
14. Chamusca	
15. Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo	
16. Idanha-a-Nova	
17. Mação	
18. Mértola	
19. Mogadouro	
20. Nordeste	
21. Ourique	
22. Pampilhosa da Serra	
23. Penalva do Castelo	
24. Penela	
25. Povoação	
26. Ribeira Brava	
27. Sabrosa	

Threatened municipalities

1. Aguiar da Beira	30. Golegã	59. Ponte de Sor
2. Albergaria-a-Velha	31. Gondomar	60. Portel
3. Albufeira	32. Grândola	61. Porto Moniz
4. Alcoutim	33. Lagoa	62. Porto Santo
5. Aljustrel	34. Lagos	63. Póvoa de Lanhoso
6. Almeida	35. Lousã	64. Praia da Vitória
7. Alvaiázere	36. Macedo de Cavaleiros	65. Reguengos de Monsaraz
8. Amadora	37. Machico	66. Resende
9. Amares	38. Mêda	67. Sabugal
10. Ansião	39. Melgaço	68. Salvaterra de Magos
11. Armamar	40. Moimenta da Beira	69. Santa Cruz
12. Arronches	41. Montemor-o-Novo	70. Santa Cruz da Graciosa
13. Arruda dos Vinhos	42. Montemor-o-Velho	71. São Vicente
14. Azambuja	43. Montijo	72. Sátão
15. Benavente	44. Mortágua	73. Sesimbra
16. Borba	45. Moura	74. Sever do Vouga
17. Boticas	46. Mourão	75. Sines
18. Calheta	47. Murtosa	76. Tabuaço
19. Campo Maior	48. Nazaré	77. Torre de Moncorvo
20. Carrazeda de Ansiães	49. Nelas	78. Vagos
21. Castelo de Vide	50. Óbidos	79. Vendas Novas
22. Castro Marim	51. Odemira	80. Viana do Alentejo
23. Celorico da Beira	52. Oleiros	81. Vidigueira
24. Cinfães	53. Olhão	82. Vila de Rei
25. Coruche	54. Penacova	83. Vila do Porto
26. Entroncamento	55. Peniche	84. Vila Nova de Paiva
27. Ferreira do Alentejo	56. Pinhel	85. Vimioso
28. Ferreira do Zêzere	57. Ponta do Sol	86. Vinhais
29. Góis	58. Ponte da Barca	87. Vizela

The 50 smallest municipalities in Portugal

24 deserts

Alandroal
Alfândega da Fé
Alvito
Arronches
Avis
Barrancos
Constância
Crato
Cuba
Freixo de Espada à Cinta
Fronteira
Gavião
Lajes das Flores
Manteigas
Marvão
Mesão Frio
Monforte
Mora
Pedrógão Grande
Penamacor
Penedono
Sardoal
Sousel
Vila Velha de Ródão

8 semi-desert

Alter do Chão
Calheta (Açores)
Castanheira de Pera
Figueira de C. Rodrigo
Nordeste
Ourique
Pampilhosa da Serra
Santa Cruz das Flores

18 out of the desert

Alcoutim
Boticas
Castelo de Vide
Fornos de Algodres
Góis
Lajes do Pico
Mêda
Mourão
Oleiros
Porto Moniz
Santa Cruz da Graciosa
São Roque do Pico
São Vicente
Tabuaço
Velas
Vila de Rei
Vila Nova de Paiva
Vimioso

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Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the contributions of several individuals who, in different ways, added value and enriched the work. In this regard, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Gisela Martins, Ivone Neiva Santos, Inês Rua, Luís Bonixe and Raquel Torres Guerra for their time, availability and shared reflections, which were fundamental to the development and deepening of the ideas presented here.

In Memoriam

Maria Margarida Ramos (1952-2025), the mother of one of the authors of this study, Giovanni Ramos, passed away in the last days of September. This simple note of recognition serves as a tribute from the other authors to their colleague, a young researcher who, in recent years, has made a significant contribution to the study of media and journalism, particularly from a local and regional perspective.

Technical details

Title

Deserts of News Europe 2025:
Portugal Report

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Design and infographics

Thais Longaray

Editing

LabCom

ISBN

978-989-9229-45-7 (papel)
978-989-9229-46-4 (pdf)

Legal deposit

554805/25

DOI

10.25768/9229-46-4

Universidade da Beira Interior
Rua Marquês D'Ávila e Bolama
6201-001 Covilhã
Portugal
www.ubi.pt

Covilhã, Portugal 2025

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This study, in addition to updating the data for the year 2022, sets out to analyse the changes that have taken place in the national information landscape. The aim is to identify which municipalities have become part of the so-called news deserts, which ones are no longer part of them, and which ones are currently under threat due to a shortage of media outlets. This study records the municipalities where non-specialised journalistic media outlets are based, as well as those where such outlets are absent. The main innovation in this edition is the introduction of a regional perspective, using NUTS III territorial division, allowing for a more detailed analysis of local dynamics.