

NATIONAL MONUMENTS AND PUBLIC ACCESS: TOWARDS STATISTICAL DATA ON CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

Despite expectations for built cultural heritage, Portugal still lacks a system for measuring the uses of heritage and inform development strategies. Efforts in heritage qualification drift towards conservation and restoration but do not include information on national and foreign visitors. One of the main causes lies on recurring argument of CH vastness, heterogeneity and access regime, but also on the legal framework that does not refer the production of statistical data, in spite the existing parallels on museums.

Heritage fruition is a low studied subject and together with the absence of systematically collected data, the heritage frame lacks information for its assessment and impacts. The national Survey of National Monuments (IMNP) occurs within the study *From Safeguard to Valorization: the National Monuments of Portugal and public access* and aims at the production of systematic data on built cultural heritage, classified under the category National Monuments, that contributes to a statistical heritage project of a national scope.

Key-words: Heritage statistics; National Monuments; Survey; Heritage Visitor; Public Access

Introduction

This paper presents the main results of the study conducted by the OPAC- Portuguese Observatory on Cultural Activities, having built cultural heritage as the research subject. The study is called *From Safeguard to Valorization: National Monuments in Portugal and Public Access* and has, as its main methodological tool, a national base survey directed towards all the National Monuments in the Portuguese territory (continent and islands) that are open for public visitation. This study articulates sociological and historical perspectives on cultural heritage valorization and the public access to NM, contributing for the production of validated statistics for CH in Portugal.

The study deals with the issue of heritage statistic, or better saying, the lack of systematically collected data on built cultural heritage and procures to understand the framework of such absence. In addition to the fact that there is not, nor has there ever been, a specific project of official statistics for cultural heritage with data on visitors, the statistical information available on visitors from other sources is discontinuous, segmented and does not refer to the categories used in the legal framework. Which is in contradiction with the scarcely studied subject of heritage fruition in Portugal.

Since the mid 2000 experts have been calling for the need for such a project in the Portuguese context, reflecting the concern of such a non-existence (Neves, 2010). Several examples have been put into practice amongst several European countries and the European Union has also introduced the issue in the Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, stating that “cultural statistics support evidence-based policy making at European and national level. The regular production of comparable and reliable cultural statistics over time allows for the identification of trends and the design of sound policies” (OJ, 2018/C 460/10).

It is not as statistical data is absent altogether from the cultural sector in Portugal, or even the cultural heritage domain. Considering museums, the difference is evident: Statistics Portugal has its own project, publishing visitor statistics since 1996 and the Law of Portuguese Museums of 2004 is explicit in this regard: "the statistics of museum visitors are sent to the Portuguese Institute of Museums and the National Institute of Statistics in accordance with the procedures and on the media established by these entities" (Law 47/2004, of 19 August).

The latest call for action towards a nationwide systematized, organized data collection project is in 2021 by the Project Group Museums in the Future (Camacho, 2021), proposing the definition of a universe set on classified buildings with visitors' control, and considering visitors (national and foreign); expenditure (total and staff); revenues (total, entries, and visitors); staff (in service, paid).

This study's methodology is of a quantitative nature, a web survey on a sample National Monument. Several dimensions of public access were exploited such as visitors, staff, activities, and facets. The findings are presented in the several aspects where cultural heritage institutions are averse to statistical information. The aim is to provide a contribution towards the knowledge of the current reality of built cultural heritage, of the impact of public policies, of the cultural practices of Portuguese citizens and foreign tourist, and also of the concerns that undermine the development of statistical data and how to overcome them.

To conclude this introduction, it is also important to highlight the strong adherence that the study has generated among the tutelages and those responsible for the NM surveyed, which has enabled a remarkable coverage of the universe, coverage that, in fact, as mentioned above, has been expanding, and whose invaluable collaboration is very grateful.

Objectives

The unsuccess of a heritage national statistical project is not the result of a thorough conceptual review on the subject or even the effect of a critical reflection, but the result of *not doing* practices rather than *choosing not to do* ones. Can this aversity be changed? The study *From Safeguard to Valorization: National Monuments in Portugal and Public Access* has as one of its main objectives to contribute to the expansion of national statistics in this field, complementing the information that Statistics Portugal has been publishing on classified built heritage (INE, 2022, pp. 114-146) as well as promote the implementation of the Work Group for Cultural Statistic (GTEC) recommendation towards the definition of an official statistical project. Compliance with European guidelines for cultural statistics was sought for. This study, based on official heritage information provided by governmental heritage institutions, aimed at the definition of a regular and homogeneous universe to be surveyed, a set of valid email contacts for each monument and at the construction and application of a survey. This study is a first approach to the production of validated statistics for Cultural Heritage in Portugal and explores a wider implementation.

Methods

Since 2019 the OPAC has been developing the Survey of National Monuments in Portugal (IMNP) as part of the above study (Neves, Macedo & Santos, 2020). This departs from an administrative source, in line with the recommendations of the Portuguese Statistical Council and the European Commission, as its aim is to produce indicators that complement the information collected, especially from the point of view of visitors and human resources, in national statistics on built heritage. Official information – homogenous and constant – is provided by the governmental heritage administration institution. The survey is based on built heritage assets classified as monuments, specifically National Monument, open to the public, visitable and with visitor control. This universe is diverse and heterogeneous, and includes monuments from all regions of Portugal, all types of buildings and from all management entities, both public and private. It should be noted that because the procedure of classification is permanent, the universe under study is updated annually.

The methodology adopted is quantitative, self-administered questionnaire survey, filled in via an online platform, with an invitation to participate addressed to those responsible for the monuments or the management organization. It is carried out annually, and the results can be updated by including retrospective data and new data according to the revision of already submitted data.

The questionnaire seeks to ascertain the NM situation regarding opening to the public, opening regime, visitor control, number of total visitors, by mode of entry, by nationality, by school groups and on guided tours, and about human resources.

This study started in 2019 with the first survey that complied with a wide range of dimensions (ownership, allocation, and management; improvement; use; visitors; human resources and MN valences). After a first characterization, which allowed a more precise delimitation of the universe of work, in the following surveys were restricted to the dimensions in which there were relevant annual variations, the use and public access, visitors and human resources. The 2020 and 2021 editions also included a module on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the NM activities (Neves, Macedo, Lima, Santos & Miranda, 2020; Neves, Macedo, Santos & Miranda, 2021) and, in 2021, a question on UNESCO World Heritage sites (Neves, Macedo & Santos, 2023). In the 2023 edition (fifth survey), the dimensions of public use and access, visitors and human resources are resumed (Neves, Macedo, Santos & Lima, 2024) and an attempt was made to enlarge the observed universe. This resulted in the inclusion of several monuments who responded for the first time. The increase in the number of respondents is due to the new site classifications and the increase of monuments open for visit and shows the dynamism of the set of visitable heritage sites.

The study, as well as the survey faces a new moment of alteration in the country's heritage institutions.

Conceptual Framework

In the mid-19th century in Portugal, as well as in the majority of Europe, cultural heritage (CH) meant mainly monumental buildings and ruins that were representative of the country's history and that carried in them a nationwide significance. Measures had to be taken to prevent their loss, such as protection, defense, and restoration. Classification was the adopted procedure, recognizing the role of monuments on national identity and allowing them special protection. By the end of the 19th century the word Monumento Nacional (National Monument) was used in official and legal documents and materialized collective identity, embodying them with a nationwide cultural and social value that justified state driven policies and practices. CH protection was established around the classification procedure and the National Monument (NM) set in its center.

Visiting historical sites, a practice that began in Europe through the Grand Tour in the eighteenth century, was a civilizing action. Heritage fruition was a common activity in the XIXth century Europe for some groups and citizens were invited to visit their historical buildings, proclaiming a wider access within the frame of an educational strategy. In the XIXth century Portugal, visitors who accessed the historical monuments were national and foreign and were essentially looking for "the Gothic and Manueline monasteries and the medieval castles" (Rosas, 1995, p. 58). During the First Republic period (1910-1926) heritage fruition had specific rules (Custódio, 2010, p. 99), and the former royal palaces were affected towards public opening and visitation, in the hope of extending and gathering more visitors. The democratic period after 1974 brought the full understanding of heritage democratization (Silva, 2014), not always successful. The considerable effort that the country has been making in the requalification of its cultural heritage, and inherently in its National Monuments, has not been accompanied by a device to produce information that allows its monitoring and takes into account, for example, the volume of entries, the number of national and foreign visitors who seek them (Neves, 2010, p. 6).

The expansion of its scope and definition led to the redefinition of the CH framework in the late 20th century with a set of high expectations put upon heritage: a fundamental resource, key element of differentiation, notoriety, and attraction with high levels of public investment, engaging in economical promotion, wealth generation, and sustainable community development. In cultural policies, heritage represents a relevant domain, particularly where budgets and expenditure are considered (Neves, Santos & Lima, 2012).

Despite these expectations we lack systems for measuring the uses of heritage and inform development strategies. Efforts in heritage qualification drift towards conservation and restoration but do not include information on national and foreign visitors (Neves, 2010). One of the main causes lies on the recurring argument of CH vastness, heterogeneity, and access regime, but also on the legal framework - Law 107/2001-, that does not refer the production of statistical data, in spite the existing parallels on museums (Law 47/2004, 19th august).

This necessity has been pointed out since the mid 2000's, supporting a statistic approach based on official information – homogenous and constant – provided by the governmental heritage administration institutions. Between 2006 and 2010, a Working Group on Culture Statistics (GTEC) consulted with the Portuguese Statistical Council. This group on its exploratory work, noticed the limits of the available information at the time and considered it useful to develop a new survey project focusing on classified buildings (monuments and archaeological sites) that had visitors' control, and consider variables such as visitors (national and foreign); expenditure (total and staff); revenues (total, entries and visitors); staff (in service, paid). The final recommendation was a new survey focusing on built heritage that included visitors (Neves, 2010, p. 11) and though it was well received by the Permanent Section of Social Statistics of the Statistical Council (SPES, 2010) it was never implemented. The proposed methodology, nevertheless, provides a valid framework, for assessing visitors in built cultural heritage.

Statistical data on cultural heritage

The relevance of statistical data on cultural heritage is pointed out by the European Council through the Work Plan for Culture, insisting on the production of comparable cultural statistics that concur to policy making (OJ, 2018/C460/10), sustaining that the regular production of comparable and reliable statistics on culture over time makes it possible to identify trends and develop sound policies. So far, without success in

publishing uniform data at a European level for specifically CH (Bina & al., 2012, p. 288), some indicators remain, such as employment, which aggregates some activities in the field of cultural heritage. Of note is the field of museums, in which EGMUS since 2002 (Hagedom-Saupe & Ermert, 2004; Haan, 2010) has been working to provide comparable statistical data at European level, using available statistics and the application of country questionnaires, with common definitions and key indicators that allow for uniform comparison and information. It is a very important contribution, although it is still a work in progress with many comparative limitations.

The absence of comparable statistical data at European level has been referred to by both the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, supporting the need to develop common cultural statistics in Europe. In 2009, a new Working Group was established, the European Statistical System Network on Culture (ESSnet-Culture), which reinforced the work carried out by the European Commission and Eurostat with the structuring, from 1997 onwards, of the information and methodology for the development of cultural statistics based on the Leadership Group Culture (LEG-Culture), that published its report in 2000 (AAVV, 2000), which, in turn, would underpin the publication in 2007 of the first cultural statistics in Europe (Eurostat, 2007).

Most EU countries gather data on CH, which sometimes result in statistical yearbooks. The main issue is a need for greater fine-tuning and comparability in the European level. At different national levels there are different examples of indicator systems. France, Spain, England and Italy are some of the references.

In the United Kingdom, the official statistics (National Statistics) for CH have a very acute focus on the cultural practices of the British population. The main source is the Taking Part Survey, published twice a year, first launched in 2005 by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, establishing Historic England as a cultural heritage partner (DDCMS, 2018/19). This survey, aimed at the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, measures the internal performance of cultural heritage by analyzing not only British visitors to all the listed and open historical sites in the United Kingdom, but also the importance for citizens of heritage conservation or the degree of satisfaction and happiness promoted by visiting heritage sites. Another official statistical collection is developed by Historic England, mandated by the DDCMS, on sites at risk (Heritage at Risk). In the case of visitors to heritage sites in the UK, official statistics are provided by Visit England through annual surveys of visitable attractions. The difficulty lies in the broad scope of the definition of visitable attractions:

“...an attraction where it is feasible to charge admission for the sole purpose of sightseeing. The attraction must be a permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow access for entertainment, interest, or education and can include places of worship (but excludes small parish churches); rather than being primarily a retail outlet or a venue for sporting, theatrical, or film performances. It must be open to the public, without prior booking, for published periods each year, and should be capable of attracting day visitors or tourists as well as local residents. In addition, the attraction must be a single business, under a single management, so that it is capable of answering the economic questions on revenue, employment etc.”

In France, the Ministry of Culture and Communication has a statistical office (Département des études de la prospective et des statistiques - DEPS), which presents data for the cultural field and publishes a yearbook with statistics for culture, that include CH. The data collected by DEPS and the Ministry of Culture relate to monuments that are under the supervision of the CMN (Centre des Monuments Nationaux), a body created under the Ministry of Culture in France. The CMN oversees about 100 national monuments that are owned by the French state and it is about these that it produces statistical information that responds to the following dimensions: protection measures, classification and inventory, frequency of monuments. The Institut Nationale de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE), on information provided by DEPS, provides data on Historical Monuments and Museums in France open to the public: local comparisons and regional comparisons, with two indicators: classified or inventoried historical monuments and museums open to the public. It presents distinctions in the categories of historical monuments and museums.

In Spain, the entity responsible for statistics for cultural heritage is the Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte. Since 2005, the División de Estadística y Estudios de la Secretaría General Técnica del Ministerio has published a report on cultural statistics from multiple statistical sources.

In Italy, under the National Statistical Programme (Programma Statistico Nazionale), since 1989 there has been an Ufficio di Statistica within the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo (MiBACT). Since 2009, this Ufficio has been allocated to the Servizio I - Affari generali, Sistemi Informativi e Tecnologie Innovative of the Ministry, being a body of the National Statistical System (SISTAN), responsible for the production and internal coordination of statistical data, dissemination, and dissemination. This organization works on four areas of analysis, with Museums, Monuments and state archaeological areas being one of these areas, with an impact on regional distribution. In this field, information on visitors and revenues is collected (by type of monuments, by province and region, by months and the crossing of these variables); and, on additional services existing in these places (by types of services, by region and the intersection of these variables). With other official entities, especially ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics of Italy) and the various regions and autonomous provinces, the field of analysis is opened to state and non-state museums, monuments, and archaeological sites accessible to the public in Italy, having as dimensions of analysis their number, location, internal organization, management, activities developed and the relationship they establish with the visiting public and with the territory.

Although Portugal lacks a CH oriented official statistic project there are some working lines that can be summoned for the overall view. In 2012 the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage (DGPC) - the heritage governmental administration at that time - adopted the practice used for museums and extended it to monuments, publishing information concerning visitors. Since then, DGPC presents statistic information but only referred to directly dependent and managed monuments and not to all the monuments in the country. The information has different levels of disaggregation (per month, per year; by nationality...) and can be traced back to 2010. Before that, statistical data can be recovered in activity reports from former governmental heritage institutions with information that dates to 2007 (Neves & Santos, 2011) and again only of monuments under the direct management of governmental institutions. Other statistical projects have been essayed, but they present some issues concerning the collected data. From 2000 to 2010, the Observatory of Cultural Activities (OAC) compiled and published data regarding visitors (total number, nationality, region, and type of entry) (Neves, Santos & Lima, 2012). From a statistical point of view, these data present several problems. They do not distinguish the types of classified CH and they consider monuments under specific guardianship in a defined moment. Another statistic project is presented by Statistics Portugal (INE). It includes the CH domain and since 1986 publishes information on built heritage. Again, this is not a specific project for built cultural heritage and relies on data provided by the governmental heritage institutions (INE, 2023). In 2021 the Project Group Museums in the Future (Camacho, 2021), resumes the 2010 Statistical Council proposals that consider data collection of "classified buildings (monuments and archaeological sites) that had visitors' control", and consider visitors (national and foreign); expenditure (total and staff); revenues (total, entries, and visitors); staff (in service, paid) (Neves, 2010, p. 11).

Results

In 2023 the survey conducted its 5th edition, with data collection from 2022. 345 NM were surveyed, and 252 answered. Of these, 225 were open for public visit thus defining the base for this edition analysis (table 1). The increase in the base under analysis has different implications in the dimensions addressed: the impact on visitors is very low (2% more), whilst relevant on human resources (11% on total staff and 7.5% on employees), as well as on private management entities (29.6% increase) and, in these, on the Catholic Church (28% are NM that have participated for the first time in the survey).

Table 1. National Monuments observed per year (2018-2022)

National Monuments observed	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Surveyed	236		179		236		233		345	
Answered	183	77,5	179	100,0	203	86,0	209	89,7	252	73,0

Of which:										
Closed to public	7	3,8	12	6,7	22	10,8	11	5,3	19	7,5
Non visitable	4	2,2	1	0,6	5	2,5	4	1,9	8	3,2
Open to visit (base under analysis)	173	94,0	166	92,7	176	86,7	194	92,8	225	89,3

Source: OPAC, IMNP.

The results show that a high percentage of NM promote the collection of information, specifically on the free admission modality (72.5%) and on their visitors (number and nationality – foreigners, 63.8%). The same is true for the collection of information on school groups (with 61.1% of NM collecting this information) and for guided visits (72.5%). Considering the relative values (percentage in relation to the total number of NMs with visitor control), the values obtained in 2022 correspond to a decrease in the NM that collect these data. However, this trend is not the same across all indicators (Table 2). The reduction in the collection of data on the mode of entry and on the nationality of visitors is contrary to what was seen until the year 2020. The increase in the number of NMs surveyed in the edition that took place during 2023 did not correspond to more registrations in relation to the free entry modality or foreign visitors. Rather, there are more Monuments open for enjoyment, but with more simplified visitor control regimes – less free and without giving relevance to nationality. The contexts resulting from the pandemic crisis – such as the adaptation of visiting systems, or even the structure of staff working in NM – may have had a more significant impact on information collection practices.

Table 2 – Observed NM with answers on visitors (2018-2022) (n, %)

Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Base	123	119	121	130	149
Entrance mode	74,0	92,4	94,2	73,1	72,5
Nationality	61,0	78,2	81,8	76,2	63,8
School groups	43,9	56,3	47,9	51,5	61,1
Guided visits	-	-	-	68,5	72,5

Source: OPAC, IMNP.

Base: NM with visitor control in each year.

Regional distribution of visitable National Monuments. Visitable NM are distributed throughout the country, with a higher incidence in the North and a lower incidence in the Autonomous Regions, verifiable in the various editions of the IMNP. In 2022 no monument from the Azores responded and the most significant increase in visitable NM (8.8% in 2021 to 12.0%) was in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (Map 1).

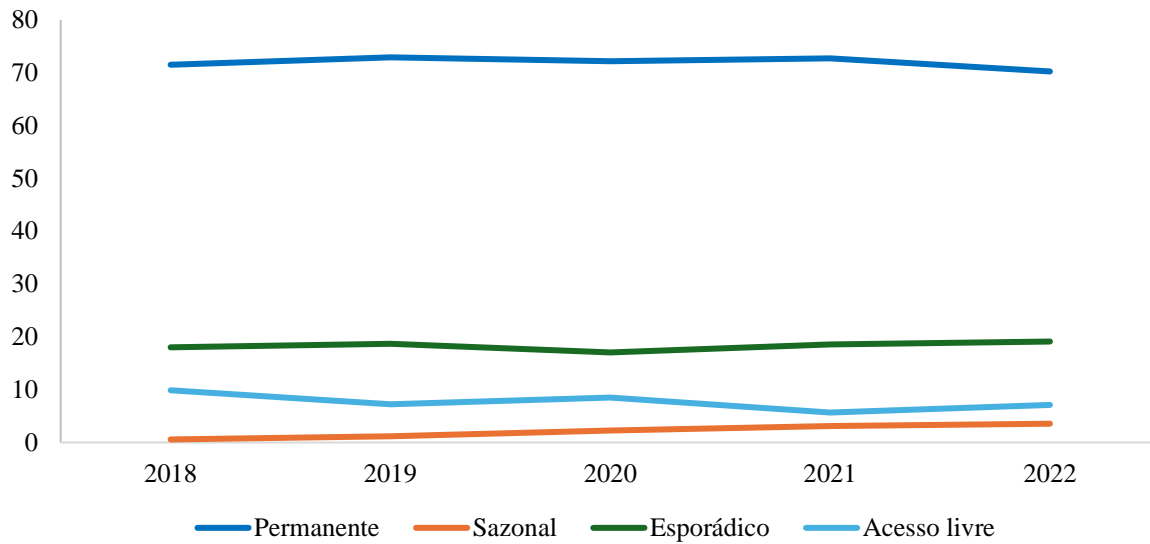
Map 1. Distribution of visitable National Monuments by municipality (2022)



Source: OPAC, IMNP, 2023.

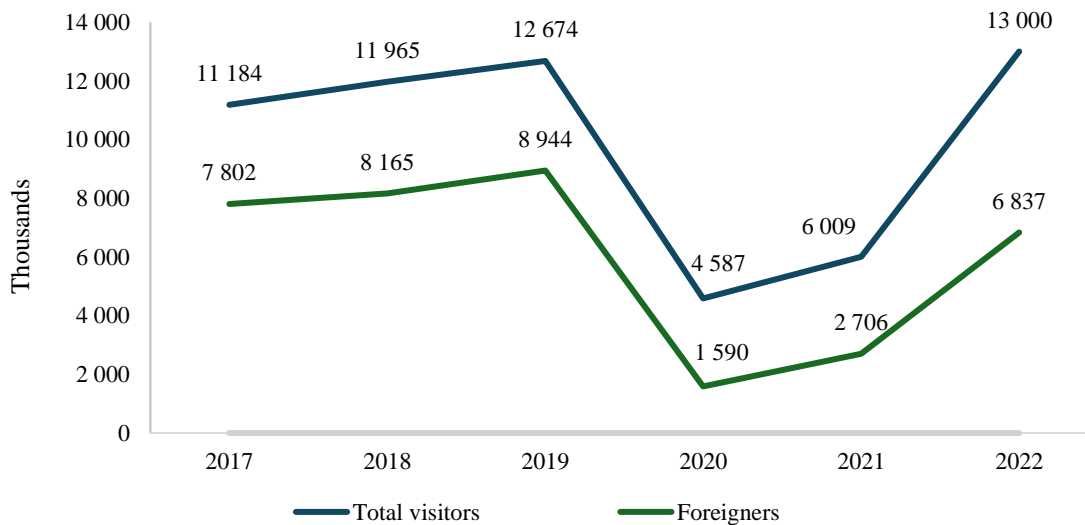
Opening to the public and visitor control. These two dimensions are basic aspects for framing visitor data. The possibility of access to monuments is a base condition for the development of the IMNP. However, such access is conditioned by the options considered feasible and most appropriate by the respective management organizations, according to a certain regime of public opening. Visitable NM essentially adopt a permanent regime of openness (70.2%) Sporadic opening (time constrained, on occasions and less predictable) accounts for 19,1% of NM and, although is the second most observed category concerning public opening, is still very far away from the permanent opening regime. The other two categories have very low values the open access regime (without any constraint determined by the managing entity) with 7.1% and the seasonal (in certain limited periods of the year) 3.6%. The preferential option for permanent opening regimes has been observed over the several years of application of the IMNP, maintaining some constancy (there is a slight decrease in 2022 of the permanent opening regimes compared to 2021, while sporadic access has also increased slightly compared to the same previous year). On the other hand, the open access regime has experienced greater fluctuations over the observed period (Graph 1), not only explained by the pandemic of 2020 and 2021.

Graph 1 – NM and public opening regime (2018-2022) (%)



Visitors. The total number of visitors in 2022 was about 13 million, more than the double of 2021 (around 6 million) and already surpassing those registered in 2019 (12.7 million), the year with the highest number of entries observed (Graph 2). It seems that the depression seen during the Covid-19 pandemic has been overcome and the growth trend observed between 2017-2019 has resumed. The resumption of tourism gave a strong contribution, and although there is an increase compared to 2021 (45%), the percentage of foreigners is still far from that seen in 2019 (70.9% against 52.6% in 2022). In other words, the dominant pattern – which in the pandemic was mostly national visitors – has been approaching the typical structure of the pre-pandemic period, but the Portuguese visitors still maintain a very significant weight.

Graph 2. Visitors of the National Monuments per year (2017-2022) (thousands)



Source: OPAC, IMNP

Type of Buildings. Religious architecture monuments are the majority of visitable NM (60.0%), followed by military ones (28.0%). With slight percentage variations, these two types of buildings remain the most common visitable NM and together they account for nine out of ten of these.

Management entities. The Catholic Church is responsible for managing most of the visitable NM, which is reinforced with the new surveyed NM in 2023 (36.4%). Together with other entities, the private sector manages almost half of the visitable NM in Portugal (48.0% in 2022), a growth trend that has been observed since 2019 (Table 3). The public sector is responsible for the management of 48.0% (in 2022) and municipalities are the most frequent entities (29.8% in 2022); on the other hand, the Ministry of Culture manages a smaller percentage of visitable NM (14.7% in 2022 against 19.1% in 2021), which has been observed since 2019 (24.7%).

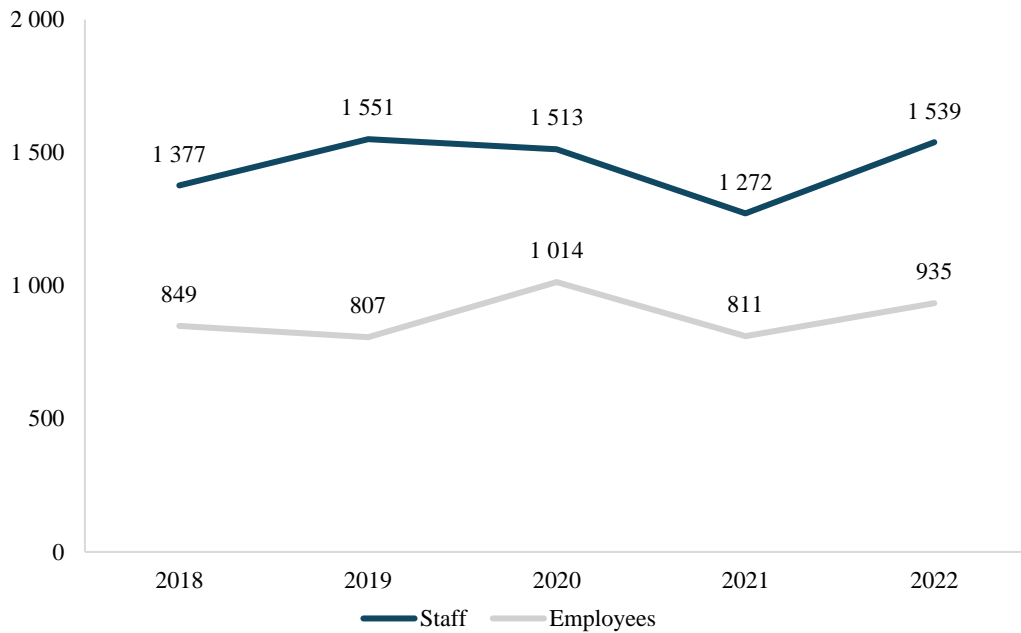
Table 3. National Monuments per management entity (2018-2022)

	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Visitable NM	172		166		176		194		225	
Management entity										
Ministry of Culture	42	24,4	41	24,7	39	22,2	37	19,1	33	14,7
Municipalities	41	31,4	40	24,1	50	28,4	57	29,4	67	29,8
Other public entities	14	8,1	13	7,8	3	1,7	2	1,0	8	3,6
Catholic Church	56	32,6	54	32,5	61	34,7	70	36,1	82	36,4
Other private entities	16	9,3	15	9,0	18	10,2	22	11,3	26	11,6
Joint management	3	1,7	3	1,8	5	2,8	6	3,1	9	4,0

Source: OPAC, IMNP.

Human Resources. The total staff of visitable NM in 2022 is 1.539 persons, an increase of 267 persons (20.9%) compared to 2021 (Graph 3). The series show the decrease of the HR structure in the pandemic, especially in 2021; currently it seems to be recovering and growing, although it is important to consider the impact of the new NM observed. In the case of employees, 935 in 2022 (about 6 out of 10), there is also a recovery, although less pronounced (15.3%) (again it is important to bear in mind the increase that comes from the new NM surveyed). This increase in HR is also mainly due to workers with precarious contracts.

Graph 3 – Staff of the National Monuments (2018-2022) (number)



Source: OPAC, IMNP.

Discussion

The five editions of the Survey of National Monuments of Portugal (IMNP), allow for a five-year series on use, public access, and human resources, as well as a six-year series on visitors. The data collected have allowed for the design of an interpretative narrative on heritage, statistic and data collecting systems. It has also provided a reflection of the review of the universe of inquiry, but also of the interest that the project has been arousing among the respective guardianships, directors and those responsible. The NM observed include six categories of management entities, public and private, which, together with the geographical coverage, allows to prove the scope of the survey.

We can argue that the absence of a heritage statistical project reflects the need for an internal observation within the monuments themselves about their practices. The built cultural heritage universe is very heterogenous whether in types of buildings or in the conditions to its fruition. This study has contributed for a more regular data collection within the National Monuments management, since it was observed that in the first editions monuments were not used to collect data nor prepared to do so. In some cases, this study provided the first tools towards data collection. The lack of official guidelines towards data collection is confirmed by this study and does not help for a common definition of an information framework that can be applied in a wide range and include classification categories other than the National Monuments.

There is a tendency for monuments to operate in a similar way, for instance by adopting a permanent opening system, that is noted in the vast majority of NM that were open and visitable in 2022, but that is still dependent on the decision-making process within the monuments themselves rather than a national overview of the type of action required. This seems to be relevant when considering that all the country has National Monuments, of different types and categories that could be understood as a heritage unit and thus reinforcing the need for the existence of a national policy or strategy to this heritage valorization.

The opening regime does not directly relate to the type of management entity, meaning that whether NM are public or privately managed they adopt similar public opening patterns.

National Monuments are not averse to visitors. Thirteen million people visited this heritage in 2022, an increase of more than 110% compared to the previous year and the highest value ever recorded in the IMNP.

This increase follows that observed, on an international scale, in the heritage domain, where there was a resumption of visitors to historical sites and archaeological sites and is in line with what was observed in other domains, such as museums, although these are still far from the values of 2019, on a global scale. Further and more detailed attention must be paid to this particular heritage unit. The increase in visitors in 2022 is very expressive and very significant of the impact of the pandemic, which forced containment in the years 2020 and 2021, and whose end was formally declared in May 2023. Contributing to this growth is the return of foreign visitors to the visitation circuits, although still in smaller percentages compared to years prior to 2020, with the expressiveness of national visitors, the focus of NM actions during the pandemic crisis and which kept visitation frequencies high after the pandemic. School visits also grew (131.8%), with a pattern of evolution of this category of visitors since before the pandemic, although they correspond to reduced contingents; The same is true of guided visits, in this category with a less pronounced growth (35.1%).

Another data that stands out here refers to human resources with an increase in both the number of total staff (including non-permanent workers) in service and the number of permanent staff, with the NMs generally operating with relatively small human resources structures, with a still relevant percentage of NM operating without permanent staff.

The regularity of this study (five editions concluded, sixth edition undergoing in 2024) contributes to the dissemination of practices that can lead to a different performance from the NM, that count with yearly data update in structured dimension, including not only other NM and thus enlarging the surveyed universe but also changes that occurred in the already surveyed ones. An official and national approach is the recommended course of action; adopting and improving already existing models like the extended model of production and dissemination of statistical information on the museological reality in Portugal in place in 2000-2012 that articulates research units, heritage administration institutions and national statistical office (Santos & Neves, 2017).

This study comes as a contribution to the knowledge on CH valorization practices and NM public access and represent an advance in several essential conditions to a future official project to operate within the National Statistic: an expedition database; the review of concepts and the dimension to be surveyed. An answering routine was established, and protocols were defined to a more effective information gathering, aiming for a regular annual updating and the dissemination of results giving back to the monuments a set of assembled information that allows them to position themselves amongst the overall sample and promote knowledge of this reality amongst technicians and stakeholders.

In 2024 OPAC proceeded to the sixth survey (with data referring to 2023) with several results already published (Neves, Macedo, Lima, Santos & Miranda, 2020).

However, more knowledge is necessary on other uses of CH, mainly local inhabitants, services, and uses from the communities. OPAC will continue to research on Cultural Heritage and publish information on a regular basis, demonstrating that CH is not averse to statistical data.

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