

URBAN INEQUALITIES IN THE ALTO SERTÃO SERGIPANO TERRITORY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE URBAN WELL-BEING INDEX (IBEU)

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>The present study analyzes the quality of urban life in the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory based on the Urban Well-Being Index (IBEU), with the objective of identifying intermunicipal inequalities and reflecting on the impacts on the formulation of public policies. The research has an exploratory character and a qualitative approach, based on content analysis and systematized data in five dimensions: urban mobility, environmental conditions, housing conditions, urban infrastructure and collective urban services. The data show that, although urban mobility is well evaluated in all municipalities, urban infrastructure presents significant deficits in all municipalities and classified as "bad" or "very bad" in this dimension, being the main factor of fragility of the territory. Porto da Folha and Poço Redondo stood out as the municipalities with the best overall performance, while Nossa Senhora de Lourdes had the worst indexes, especially in infrastructure and services. The disparity between the indicators highlights the need for more targeted public policies, capable of reducing asymmetries and promoting balanced urban development in the region. It also needs structuring investments and integrated management. The IBEU presents itself as a useful tool for monitoring urban inequalities and planning public policies in the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Regional development; Territorial inequality; Infrastructure; Quality of life; Sustainability.</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Public policies consist of sets of programs, actions, and decisions taken by public managers, with or without the participation of other entities, public, and/or private, with the purpose of ensuring the rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of 1988. These policies promote the well-being of society, meeting the demands, needs and needs of the population [1], [2], [3].

The definitions of public policies have been reformulated over time, according to different theoretical approaches. In this context, Laswell (1936), Simon (1957), Lindblom (1959, 1979), and Easton (1965) stand out, whose contributions were fundamental to the conceptual

and analytical development of the field of public policy studies [3], [4], [5], [6], [7].

In the United States of America (USA), Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations (1961-1968), was responsible for introducing public policies as a management tool aimed at meeting social demands. The central objective was to ensure collective well-being and solve community problems effectively [3], [6], [8].

The formulation of public policies includes, among its elements, the definition of the agenda and alternatives. The first refers to the priorities to be faced, while the second

involves the feasible actions to achieve the established objectives. These actions are usually implemented in areas such as health, environment, social assistance, transportation, public safety, among others. The focus is on improving the quality of life of the population, based on the transformations and impacts generated in the benefited social structures [1], [2], [3].

Public policies, therefore, are essential instruments for meeting social demands, being elaborated based on diagnoses and mappings that identify the needs of the population in general or of specific groups [9], [10]. Based on these diagnoses, public entities develop plans aimed at promoting well-being, quality of life, and reducing socioeconomic inequalities [11], [12], [13], [14], [15]. In addition, it seeks to ensure coherence and effectiveness in implementation, so that the impacts are concrete and positive [16], [17].

In this context, the use of indicators and indices as planning tools becomes essential to guide actions and achieve the proposed objectives. Such instruments offer a faithful portrait of local and spatial reality, in addition to allowing future projections [18], [19], [20].

According to the United Nations (UN, 2019), in 1950, only 30% of the world's population lived in urban areas, since development in these places was still incipient and the preference for staying in rural areas predominated. In 2019, this percentage reached 55%, and it is estimated that, by 2050, about 70% of the world's population will be concentrated in urban areas. This growth demands from public management investments in essential services, such as transportation, leisure, housing, education, health, infrastructure, among others, in order to ensure the collective well-being and sustainability of the planet [1], [3], [21], [22].

Among the various indices and indicators available to support the formulation of public policies, the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Urban Well-Being Index (IBEU) stand out, the latter being the focus of this study.

The evaluation of the quality of life in cities demands more than the analysis of traditional economic indicators; it requires the observation of multiple dimensions of urban daily life. In this sense, the IBEU emerges as a fundamental tool by synthesizing, in a single indicator, aspects such as mobility, access to collective services, infrastructure, environmental, and housing conditions. This index is prepared by the National Institute of Science and Technology - INCT Observatory of the Metropolis - and published in book format, with comparisons between the main metropolitan regions of the country. The data used come mainly from the Demographic

Census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) [1], [3], [22].

In Brazil, the application of the IBEU in territories with less economic dynamism can contribute to the identification of regional inequalities and to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the public policies implemented.

It is recurrent that small Brazilian municipalities face population exodus processes, especially among young people who migrate in search of better living conditions in large urban centers, due to the scarcity of jobs and services [23], [24], [25]. This movement causes the emptying of the interior and imposes increasing challenges on metropolises, which need to expand their urban infrastructure [26], [27]. The insufficiency of public policies aimed at settling the population and the lack of job opportunities are aggravating factors of this phenomenon [23], [25].

The creation of the Ministry of Cities, in the first government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in 2003, represented a milestone in the formulation of a national urban policy. The proposal aimed to articulate areas such as housing, sanitation, mobility, services, and territorial planning, in order to reduce urban and regional inequalities. It also sought to encourage the formation of metropolitan regions and territorial arrangements, in addition to channeling resources to peripheral and less developed municipalities [28], [29]. The institution of the ministry strengthened metropolitan governance by promoting coordination and planning instruments aimed at territorial equity [30].

The Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory, located in the northwestern portion of the state of Sergipe, is composed of seven municipalities: Canindé do São Francisco, Gararu; Monte Alegre de Sergipe, Nossa Senhora da Glória, Nossa Senhora de Lourdes, Poço Redondo, and Porto da Folha. Its creation occurred through State Decree No. 24,338/2007, as a planning unit aimed at promoting sustainable and equitable development among the regions [31], [32].

Each municipality has unique socioeconomic characteristics:

- **Canindé do São Francisco:** highest GDP per capita in the state;
- **Gararu:** lowest population density in the state (2021);
- **Monte Alegre de Sergipe:** 18th largest corn producer in the state (2020);
- **Nossa Senhora da Glória:** known as the "Capital of the Sertão", for exercising centrality in the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory;
- **Nossa Senhora de Lourdes:** third largest breeder of chickens in the state (2020);

- **Poço Redondo**: highest cow's milk production in Sergipe (2020);

- **Porto da Folha**: third largest breeder of milked cows in the state (2020) [31] [32].

These municipalities have different levels of development, which is reflected in the effectiveness of territorial governance. Thus, it is necessary to direct efforts to the weakest points, in order to promote greater regional homogeneity.

The study is relevant because it addresses the quality of urban life in one of the most vulnerable regions of the state of Sergipe – the Alto Sertão Sergipano -, highlighting structural inequalities and the need for more effective and equitable public policies. In view of the context of precarious urbanization in the Brazilian semi-arid region, the territorial analysis based on the IBEU provides subsidies for government interventions and for a more integrated urban planning.

Despite occasional advances, the Alto Sertão Sergipano continues to present significant deficits in urban infrastructure and public services. The central question is to verify whether the levels of urban well-being and their dimensions reveal intra- and inter-municipal inequalities?

The practical implications concern the allocation of resources and the formulation of territorialized public policies, especially in the dimensions that represent greater fragility for each municipality. The study also proposes to contribute as an instrument of territorial diagnosis, regional urban planning and strengthening of local governance, in addition to promoting the use of indicators, such as the IBEU, in public agendas of urban development.

The choice of the theme is due to the scarcity of systematic studies that deal with the quality of urban life in the interior of the Brazilian Northeast, based on objective and compatible indicators. The use of IBEU allows for a standardized, up-to-date and useful analysis for public managers, urban planners and academics.

In view of this, this work aims to analyze the IBEU indicators in the municipalities that make up the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory, in the state of Sergipe. The region concentrates about 7.11% of the population and 22.3% of the territorial area of the state. The analysis seeks to identify performance patterns, as well as structural strengths and weaknesses that condition urban well-being.

1.1 CANINDÉ DO SÃO FRANCISCO

Canindé was originally a district of the municipality of Porto da Folha. In 1943, it was renamed Curituba, a name it remained until 1950. In 1953, it was elevated to the category of municipality, with the dismemberment of Porto da Folha and the constitution of

its district-headquarters. In 1958, it adopted the current name of Canindé do São Francisco [32].

In 2024, the area of the municipality was 1,080.009 km², being the largest in the state of Sergipe. It is inserted in the Sergipe microregion of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

The predominant biome is 100% Caatinga, characterizing it as a municipality belonging to the Brazilian semi-arid region. The Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI) in 2010 was 0.567, which is considered low, although it showed significant growth in relation to 1991 (0.233) and 2000 (0.381) [32].

In 2022, the average monthly salary of formal workers was 2.6 minimum wages, which placed the municipality in seventh place in the state. The number of formally employed workers was 3,374 people. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, in 2021, was R\$ 93,714.69, the highest among the municipalities of Sergipe [32].

According to the 2022 Census, the population was 26,834 inhabitants, occupying the 15th position in the state. The demographic density was 28.93 inhabitants per square kilometer (inhabitants/km²). For the year 2025, the estimated population was 33,641 inhabitants [32].

The schooling rate of the population between 6 and 14 years old, in 2022, was 97.62%, showing growth in relation to 2010, when it was 96.80%. Compared to the other municipalities in Sergipe, it occupied the 69th position among the 75 existing ones. The Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), in the early years of elementary school, was 4.2 (69th position) and, in the final years, 3.9 (27th position) [32].

The average infant mortality rate in 2023 was 20.37 deaths for every 1,000 live births, which placed the municipality in 39th position in the state [32].

In 2019, the urbanized area of the municipality was 5.79 km², corresponding to the 18th position in the state. In 2022, 47.02% of the households had adequate sanitary sewage (through a general network, rainwater network or cesspool connected to the network), placing the municipality in 22nd place among the 75 municipalities in the state. The afforestation of public roads reached 49.87%, placing it in 11th place in the state [32].

On the other hand, the data from 2010 indicated that only 6.9% of the urban households located on public roads had adequate urbanization (with culverts, sidewalks, pavements, and curbs), placing it in the 56th position in the state [32].

The municipality has a Municipal Basic Sanitation Policy and a Municipal Basic Sanitation Plan, duly instituted.

1.2 GARARU

The municipality of Gararu was originally called Currais de Pedras, a name derived from the corrals built with stones. The district was created through Provincial Resolution No. 1,003, of April 16, 1875. Subsequently,

Provincial Law No. 1,047, of March 16, 1877, elevated the district to the category of village, dismembering it from the municipality of Ilha do Ouro. Until 1911, it consisted only of the main district [32].

In the territorial divisions that took place in 1936 and 1937, the municipality became composed of two districts: Gararu and Providência. In 1944, the district of Providência was renamed Itabi, which was dismembered from Gararu in 1953, becoming an autonomous municipality. In 1957, the districts of Lagoa Funda and São Mateus da Palestina were created [32].

The locality was favored by the territorial penetration encouraged after the Dutch invasion. After the expulsion of the invaders, the territory began to be occupied by indigenous people led by Chief Gararu, who settled at the mouth of the Gararu stream, on the banks of the São Francisco River [32].

In 2024, the area of the municipality was 661,622 km², occupying the eighth place in the state. It is inserted in the Sergipe microregion of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

Its biome is entirely characterized by the Caatinga, inserting the municipality in the Brazilian semi-arid region. The MHDI in 2010 was 0.564, which is considered low, although it has advanced in relation to previous indexes: 0.249 in 1991 (very low) and 0.391 in 2000 [32].

1.3 MONTE ALEGRE DE SERGIPE

The territory that currently constitutes the municipality of Monte Alegre de Sergipe was part of the morgado of Porto da Folha, colonized by Tomás Bernardes and later succeeded by his son, Jerônimo Fernandes [32].

The population center was founded at the end of the nineteenth century, on a site located along the road that connected Nossa Senhora da Glória to the city of Porto da Folha [32].

With the name of Monte Alegre de Sergipe, the territory was elevated to the category of municipality and district through State Law No. 525-A, of November 25, 1953, being dismembered from Nossa Senhora da Glória and constituted as a district-headquarters [32].

The municipality is located in the northwest region of the state of Sergipe. The city is known for tourist attractions, such as Cangaço Eco Park, Grotta de Angico, and Ilha de Ouro, which attract visitors to the region [32].

Its territorial area, in 2024, was 387,352 km², occupying the 75th position among the municipalities in the state. Like other municipalities in the region, it is inserted in the Sergipe micro-region of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

The predominant biome is 100% Caatinga, which characterizes it as part of the Brazilian semi-arid region. The MHDI in 2010 was 0.553, considered low, but with

significant growth compared to previous years: 0.251 in 1991 (very low) and 0.390 in 2000 [32].

1.4 NOSSA SENHORA DA GLÓRIA

The village was initially called Boca da Mata. Between the years 1600 and 1620, it was composed of ranches. Parish priest Francisco Gonçalves Lima carried out a campaign with the aim of acquiring an image of Nossa Senhora da Glória, involving local residents. This mobilization motivated the change of the name of the locality to Nossa Senhora da Glória. Because it hosts the largest fair in the region, the municipality became known as the "Capital of the Sertão" [32].

In 1922, the locality was elevated to the headquarters of the 2nd District of Paz de Gararu, already with the current name. During this period, it was established as a district, subordinated to the municipalities of Gararu and Porto da Folha. In 1928, it was elevated to the status of village, being dismembered from these municipalities and becoming part of the municipality of Capela. The first intendant was João Francisco de Souza, who took office in 1929 and was responsible for the construction of the city hall. In 1960, the municipality became constituted only by the district-headquarters [32].

Its territorial area is 754,959 km², occupying the sixth position among the municipalities in the state of Sergipe. It is inserted in the Sergipe microregion of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

The predominant biome is 100% Caatinga, characterizing it as part of the Brazilian semi-arid. The MHDI in 2010 was 0.587, which is considered low, although it has advanced in relation to 1991 (0.319) and 2000 (0.432) [32].

1.5 NOSSA SENHORA DE LOURDES

In 1810, the Pernambuco couple Joaquim José and Ana Josefa da Rocha began the occupation of the territory that would become the municipality, initially settling in Escorial, on the banks of the São Francisco River. Later, they advanced until they reached a lagoon. Until 1938, the locality belonged to the municipality of Gararu, and was later incorporated into Canhoba [32].

In 1950, the name Lagoa das Antas was changed to Arraial das Antas. The locality was elevated to the status of village in 1953 and, in the following year, it became a district, subordinated to the municipality of Canhoba. In 1963, it was elevated to the category of city, with the dismemberment of Canhoba, becoming two districts [32].

Its territorial area is 82,767 km², occupying the 62nd position among the municipalities in the state. It is inserted in the Sergipe microregion of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

The biome of the municipality is entirely composed of the Caatinga, being located in the Brazilian semi-arid region. The MHDI in 2010 was 0.598, which is considered low, although it showed significant growth in relation to 1991 (0.340) and 2000 (0.459) [32].

1.6 POÇO REDONDO

The municipality of Poço Redondo was colonized at the end of the seventeenth century, being initially linked to the morgado of Porto da Folha. In 1887, the village of Curralinho emerged, consisting of a school on the banks of the São Francisco River. In 1902, a cotton ginning factory was installed in the village of Poço de Cima, founded by Manuel Pereira. Later, the locality was renamed Poço Redondo, because it was semi-surrounded by the Jacaré stream [32].

Law No. 525-A, of 1953, elevated the locality to the category of municipality and district, with the name of Poço Verde, dismembering it from Porto da Folha. Later, the district seat became Poço Redondo. In 1956, the municipality became constituted only by the district-headquarters, maintaining this composition in 1960 [32].

Its territorial area is 1,074.584 km², occupying the second position among the municipalities of Sergipe. It is inserted in the Sergipe microregion of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

The predominant biome is 100% Caatinga, characterizing it as an integral part of the Brazilian semi-arid. The MHDI in 2010 was 0.529, which is considered low, although it has advanced in relation to previous years: 0.228 in 1991 and 0.363 in 2000 [32].

1.7 PORTO DA FOLHA

The municipality of Porto da Folha originated in the seventeenth century, going through several changes of headquarters: Ilha de Ouro, Porto Principal, Ilha de São Pedro on the São Francisco River, Curral de Pedras (current Gararu), and Boa Vista, until finally settling on the Curral do Buraco farm, where the colonizer Tomás Bermudes settled. In 1821, with the growth of the village, it was dismembered from the parish of Santo Antônio do Urubu de Baixo (now Propriá), with the name of São Pedro do Porto da Folha, with the island of São Pedro as its headquarters [32].

By means of the decree of 1832 and Provincial Resolution No. 676, of June 8, 1864, the district of São Pedro do Porto da Folha was created, later elevated to the category of village. By the Provincial Law of February 19, 1835, the seat was transferred to the village of Buraco, changing its name to Nossa Senhora do Porto da Folha. In 1836, a new decree transferred the headquarters to the village of Curral das Pedras. By Provincial Law No. 841, of March 23, 1870, the headquarters was again transferred,

this time to the village of Boa Vista, with the name of Ilha de Ouro [32].

Provincial Resolution No. 1,003, of April 16, 1875, created the district of Curral das Pedras and annexed it to the municipality of Ilha de Ouro (formerly called Nossa Senhora do Porto da Folha). Provincial Laws No. 664, of May 11, 1864, and No. 1,153, of April 28, 1880, determined that the headquarters would be renamed Nossa Senhora do Porto da Folha [32].

Provincial Law No. 1,047, of March 15, 1877, dismembered the district of Curral de Pedras from the municipality of Ilha de Ouro, later elevating it to the category of village with the name of Gararu. The municipality of Porto da Folha was elevated to the category of city by State Law No. 195, of November 11, 1896 [32].

In 1911, Porto da Folha was constituted only by the district headquarters, a condition that remained until 1933. The administrative divisions of December 31, 1936 and December 31, 1937 indicated that the municipality was composed of two districts: Porto da Folha and Canindé, a situation that lasted until 1943. State Decree-Law No. 377, of December 31, 1943, later revoked by Decree No. 533, of December 17, 1944, changed the name of the district of Canindé to Curituba, which was dismembered from the municipality of Porto da Folha by State Law No. 525-A, of November 25, 1953 [32].

In 1960, the municipality continued to be composed only of the district headquarters.

Its territorial area is 878,044 km², occupying the fifth place among the municipalities in the state. It is inserted in the Sergipe microregion of Sertão do São Francisco and in the Sertão Sergipano mesoregion [32].

The predominant biome is 100% Caatinga, and the municipality is inserted in the Brazilian semi-arid region. The MHDI in 2010 was 0.568, which is considered low, although it has registered significant growth in comparison with 1991 (0.256) and 2000 (0.387) [32].

Therefore, all municipalities have an MHDI classified as low in 2010, although they have registered consistent growth since 1991. Nossa Senhora de Lourdes has the highest MHDI in the territory and Poço Redondo has the lowest MHDI. The municipalities with the largest territorial extension, Canindé do São Francisco and Poço Redondo, do not necessarily have better social indicators [32].

2 METHODOLOGY

Regarding the objectives, the research is classified as exploratory, since it seeks to provide greater familiarity with the theme and contribute to the improvement of ideas [33], [34], [35].

The approach adopted is qualitative, with an emphasis on valuing ideas and using different sources for

research, in order to give greater credibility to the study [33], [34], [35].

As for the techniques used, bibliographic research stands out, based on secondary sources, especially academic works [33], [34], [35].

Additionally, content analysis is used as a strategy to organize and interpret the results found, allowing the construction of conclusions that expand the understanding of the theme [33], [34], [35].

The research is based on the analysis of data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Table 1 describes the dimensions and indicators of the Urban Well-Being Index (IBEU). Table 2 presents the classification criteria of the

IBEU dimensions (ranging from "very bad" to "excellent"), while Table 3 shows the specific indices of the municipalities that make up the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory. The interpretation of the data was based on a comparative approach, identifying the dimensions with the best and worst performance, which were organized into categories of strengths and weaknesses.

The IBEU highlights the main dimensions that contribute to the well-being of the population, through the measurement of the services provided by public entities at the federal, state, and/or municipal levels. Its values are based on data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – IBEU dimensions and indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Description
D1. Urban Mobility	Commuting from home to work	Percentage of employed persons who spend up to one hour commuting to work
D.2 Urban Environmental Conditions	Afforestation around the households	Percentage of persons living in households whose surroundings are wooded
	Open sewage around households	Percentage of people living in households whose surroundings do not have open sewage
	Garbage accumulated around households	Percentage of people living in households whose surroundings do not have accumulated garbage
	Subnormal agglomerate	Percentage of people who do not live in subnormal agglomeration
D.3 Urban Housing Conditions	Household density	Percentage of people living in households with a density of up to two residents per bedroom
	Resident/bathroom density	Percentage of people living in households with a density of up to four residents per bathroom
	Material of the walls of the houses	Percentage of people who live in households with adequate walls (masonry or wood)
	Type of households	Percentage of people who live in a house, village house, condominium or apartment
D.4 Collective Urban Services	Water service	Percentage of persons living in households served by the general water network
	Sewage service	Percentage of people living in households served by the general sewage system
	Energy service	Percentage of people living in households served by distribution companies or other energy sources
	Garbage collection	Percentage of people living in households served by cleaning services or dumpsters
	Street lighting	Percentage of people living in households whose surroundings have public lighting
D.5 Urban Infrastructure	Paving	Percentage of persons living in households whose patio has pavement
	Sidewalk	Percentage of persons living in households whose street face has a sidewalk
	Curb/Guide	Percentage of persons living in households whose street face has curbs/curbs
	Manhole or wolf's mouth	Percentage of people living in households whose surroundings have a manhole or manhole

Wheelchair ramp	Percentage of persons living in households whose street face has an access ramp for wheelchair users
Street identification	Percentage of people living in households where the street has identification

Source: Ribeiro; Ribeiro (2013)

Table 1 presents the methodological structure of the IBEU, showing the dimensions and indicators used to measure the living conditions of the population in the urban space. The index is organized into five dimensions, which include structural aspects of urban quality, considering mobility, environment, housing, infrastructure, and services. All indicators are expressed as a percentage of people benefited, which makes it possible to assess the degree of coverage and access of the population to the conditions considered adequate for urban life.

The methodological procedure adopted comprises the following steps: survey of IBEU variables for the municipalities; classification of dimensions by range of variation; comparative analysis between municipalities; identification of patterns of strengths and weaknesses; and,

interpretation of the results in the light of theoretical references.

3 DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The IBEU analysis in the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory reveals a dynamic marked by contrasts between well-evaluated dimensions and persistent structural weaknesses. Based on the classification criteria presented, it is possible to identify performance patterns that contribute to the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each municipality.

The IBEU classification follows the variation values established in Table 2, which defines the intervals corresponding to the performance levels, ranging from "very bad" to "excellent".

Table 2 – Criteria for classifying the dimensions

	Dimensions				
	Terrible	Bad	Medium	Good	Great
Table of Contents	0 to 0.500	0.501 to 0.700	0.701 to 0.800	0.801 to 0.900	0.901 to 1.000

Source: Authorship based on IBEU 2016 (2026)

This classification allows each dimension to be evaluated in isolation, as well as the general IBEU of the municipalities. In this way, it becomes possible to identify the areas in which each locality has a higher or lower quality of urban life. The index varies on a scale ranging from "terrible" to "excellent". Its values range from 0 to 1, and the closer it is to 1, the better the performance of the municipality in the dimension analyzed.

The intervals do not have a uniform amplitude: the "very bad" and "bad" categories cover wider ranges, while

the others have narrower intervals, indicating greater rigor for a municipality to achieve higher classifications, which requires higher levels of performance.

The IBEU is an indicator that measures the quality of urban life based on five dimensions. The final index corresponds to the average of the results obtained in each of them. The result of the IBEU comparative analysis for the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 – IBEU of the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano

Municipality	Mobility	Environmental	Housing	Services	Infrastructure	IBEU
Canindé do São Francisco	0,960	0,806	0,792	0,809	0,507	0,775
Gararu	0,952	0,751	0,839	0,765	0,546	0,771
Monte Alegre de Sergipe	0,954	0,754	0,846	0,794	0,590	0,788
Our Lady of Glory	0,961	0,662	0,864	0,772	0,551	0,762
Our Lady of Lourdes	0,959	0,657	0,835	0,658	0,481	0,718
Round Well	0,900	0,840	0,821	0,888	0,532	0,796
Porto da Folha	0,962	0,756	0,818	0,891	0,601	0,806
IBEU	0,950	0,747	0,831	0,797	0,544	0,774

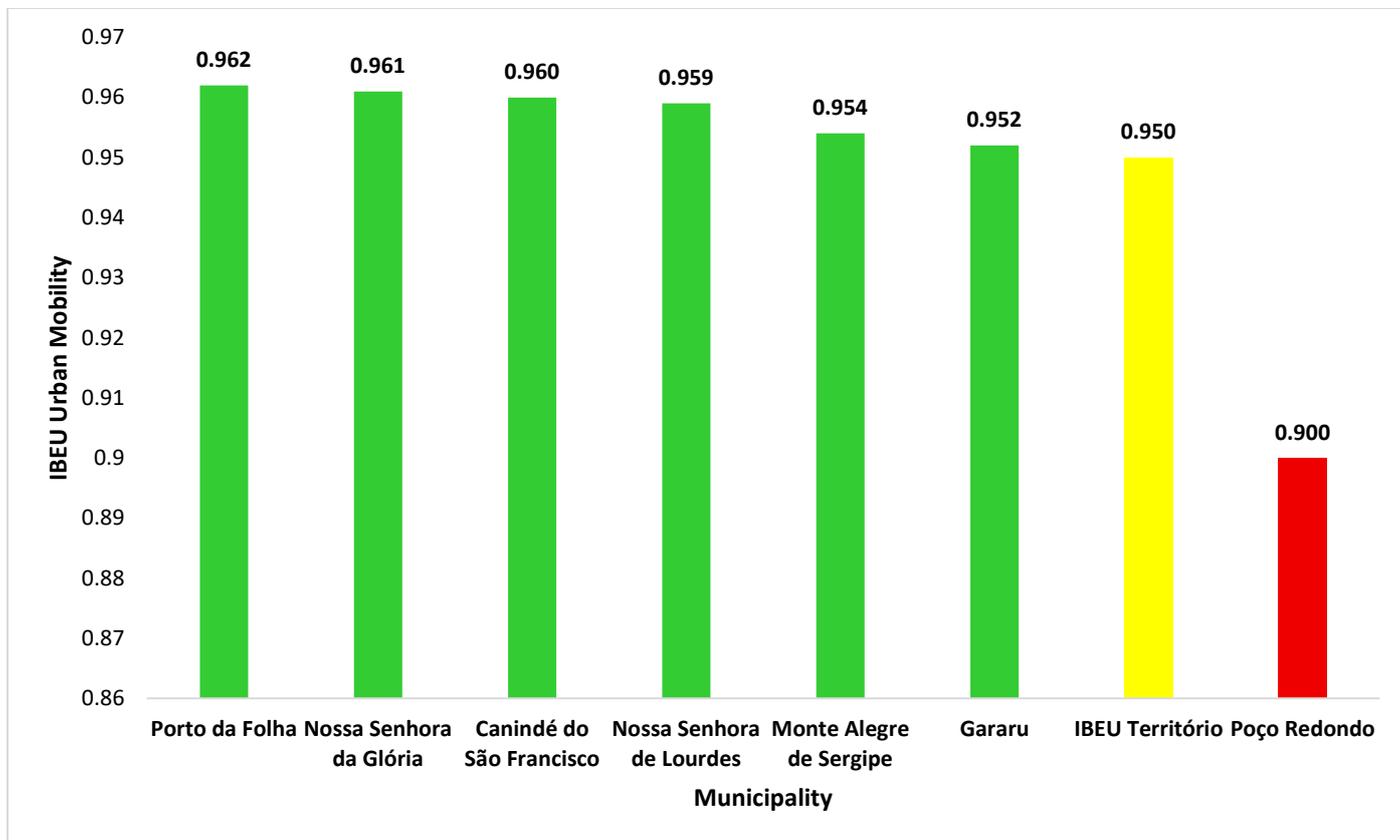
Source: Authorship (2026)

The interpretation of each dimension is presented below, based on the means and variations observed between the municipalities.

3.1 URBAN MOBILITY (D1): A POSITIVE HIGHLIGHT (0.950 - EXCELLENT)

The Urban Mobility dimension is the most consolidated in the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory, configuring itself as a positive highlight. A high and relatively uniform performance is observed among the municipalities, with variations between 0.900 and 0.962, which places them in the "excellent" classification in all cases. Figure 1 shows the IBEU of each municipality.

Figure 1 – IBEU Mobility by municipality



Source: Authorship (2026)

Figure 1 shows that the municipality of Porto da Folha (0.962) has the best performance in urban mobility among the municipalities analyzed. In turn, Poço Redondo (0.900) has the worst performance, being below the average of the territory (0.950). The difference of 0.062 points between these municipalities indicates a relevant disparity in the territory, evidencing the need for investments in transportation and urban infrastructure to improve this indicator.

The average IBEU of the dimension was 0.950, classified as "excellent", indicating good urban accessibility, adequate transport conditions and satisfactory mobility structure. Most municipalities have a high performance, with indices above the territorial average.

These results indicate that the majority of the population spends up to one hour commuting from home to work, which may be associated with the reduced size of

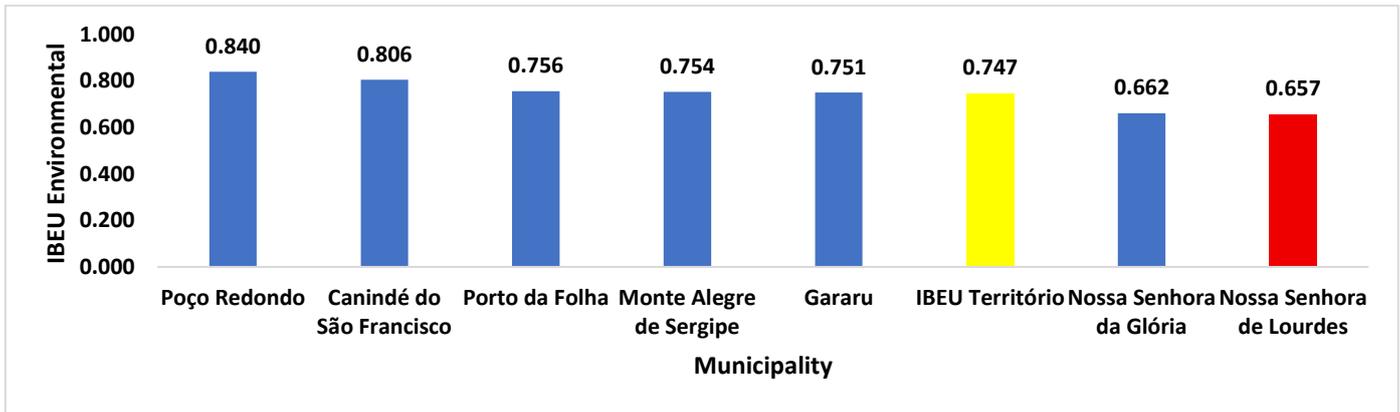
cities and the lower incidence of congestion. They also suggest proximity between districts and urban centers, as well as relative effectiveness of local mobility policies.

In general, the region presents very positive indexes, demonstrating that commuting and physical access are not the main obstacles to urban well-being. Thus, urban mobility is configured as the most consolidated dimension in the Alto Sertão Sergipano.

3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS (D2): REGIONAL INEQUALITY (0.747 – MEDIUM)

This dimension focuses on the healthiness and quality of the immediate environment for households, reflecting the conditions of the urban environment, such as green areas, basic sanitation, and environmental quality. Figure 2 presents the IBEU of the environmental dimension of the territory.

Figure 2 – Environmental IBEU of the municipalities



Source: Authorship (2026)

There is a strong inequality between the municipalities, with variations from 0.657 (Nossa Senhora de Lourdes) to 0.840 (Poço Redondo), resulting in a difference of 0.183 points, which demonstrates significant environmental heterogeneity. The most fragile municipalities were Nossa Senhora da Glória (0.662) and Nossa Senhora de Lourdes (0.657), both classified as "bad", revealing environmental vulnerabilities that may be associated with environmental management problems, pollution and degraded areas. This urban environmental fragility may require expansion of basic sanitation, improvement in waste collection and investments in environmental infrastructure.

On the other hand, the municipalities of Poço Redondo (0.840) and Canindé do São Francisco (0.806) achieved the "good" classification, indicating the best environmental indicators in the territory and suggesting more favorable conditions for sanitation and environmental infrastructure. The other municipalities have an "average" classification, which indicates the existence of room for improvement.

The average IBEU of the dimension was 0.747, considered "medium", revealing significant environmental disparities between the municipalities and the need for specific public policies to promote advances, especially in Nossa

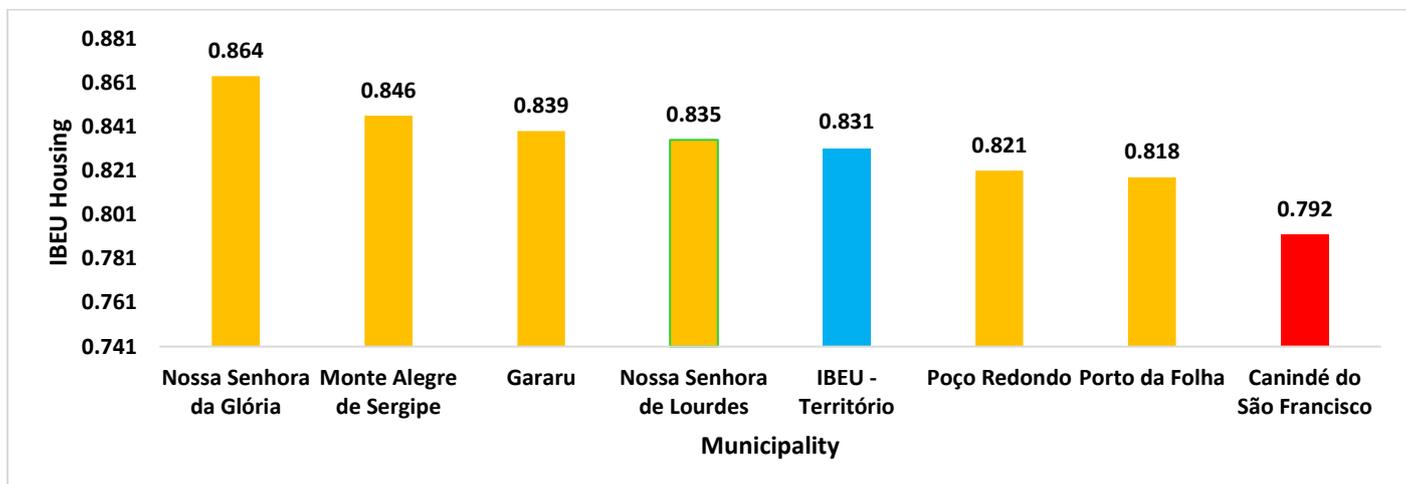
Senhora de Lourdes and Nossa Senhora da Glória. Issues such as low afforestation, the presence of open sewage and/or garbage accumulation continue to be relevant challenges.

An interesting inversion is observed in relation to urban mobility: Poço Redondo presented the worst performance in this dimension, but obtained the best result in the environmental dimension. In turn, Nossa Senhora da Glória was among the best in mobility and, in the environmental issue, it has a lower performance. This scenario suggests that good mobility indices do not necessarily imply better environmental conditions, since more urbanized municipalities may face greater environmental pressures, while those with lower urban density may present relatively more favorable environmental conditions.

3.3 HOUSING CONDITIONS (D3) (0.831 – GOOD)

This dimension directly reflects the quality of housing in the municipalities, being related to the adequacy of the household, the density of occupation and the basic infrastructure of the residence. In general, the performance is consistently high, with indices ranging from 0.792 to 0.864, resulting in a moderate variation of 0.072 points, classified between "average" and "good". Figure 3 presents the IBEU of the housing dimension.

Figure 3 – Housing IBEU of the municipalities



Source: Authorship (2026)

The municipalities of Nossa Senhora da Glória (0.864) and Monte Alegre de Sergipe (0.846) stand out positively, indicating that most of the population lives in adequate and well-structured housing.

In turn, Canindé do São Francisco (0.792) had the lowest index among the municipalities analyzed, although still classified as "medium", close to the "good" range. This condition indicates a greater qualitative housing deficit, possible structural problems in housing and lack of housing infrastructure.

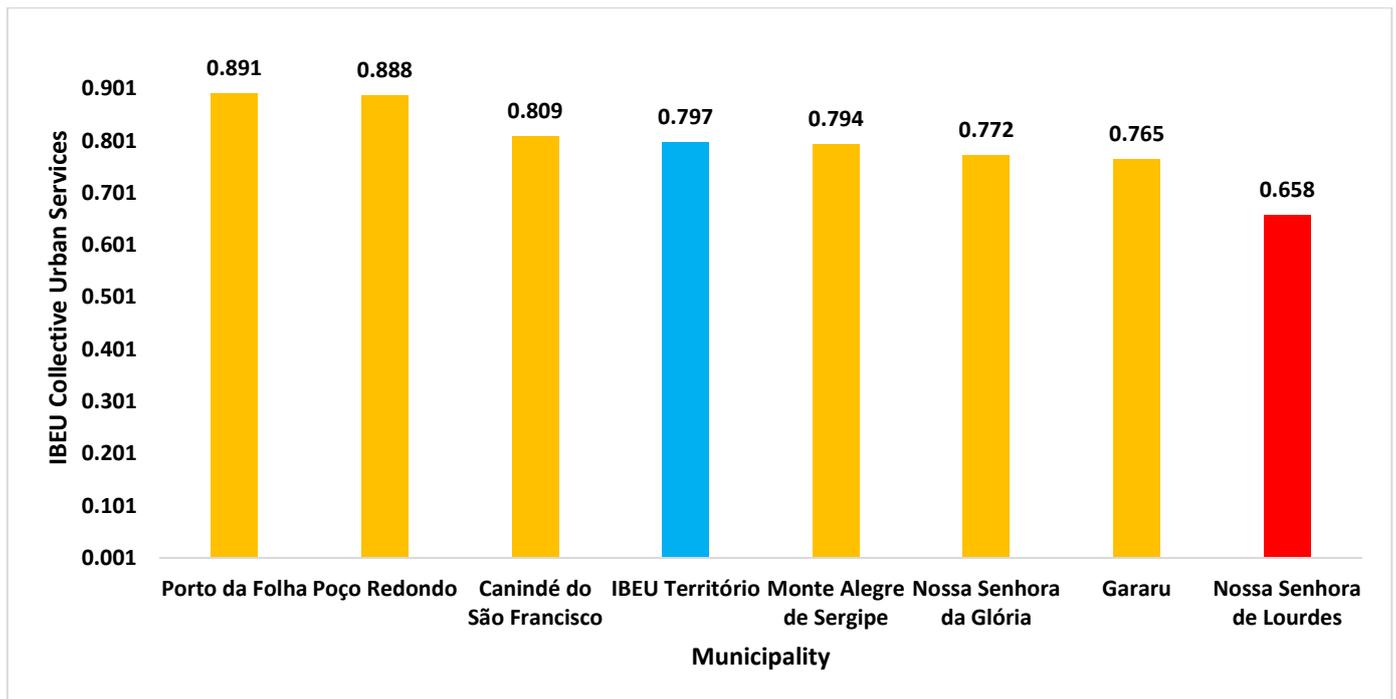
The average IBEU of the dimension was 0.831, considered "good", which demonstrates that housing

conditions are relatively homogeneous and satisfactory in the territory analyzed, even though internal inequalities persist that demand differentiated public policies.

3.4 COLLECTIVE URBAN SERVICES (D4) (0.797 – MEDIUM/GOOD)

This dimension represents the reach of the basic infrastructure of essential services, such as health, education, leisure, energy supply, sewage network, and waste collection. Figure 4 shows the performance of the urban services dimension of the municipalities analyzed.

Figure 4 – IBEU of collective urban services



Source: Authorship (2026)

The indices vary between 0.658 (Nossa Senhora de Lourdes) and 0.891 (Porto da Folha), revealing inequality in access to collective urban services.

Nossa Senhora de Lourdes had the worst performance, being classified as "poor", while the other municipalities vary between the "medium" and "good" classifications.

Porto da Folha (0.891) stood out with an index close to the "excellent" classification, reflecting wide coverage of the main public services.

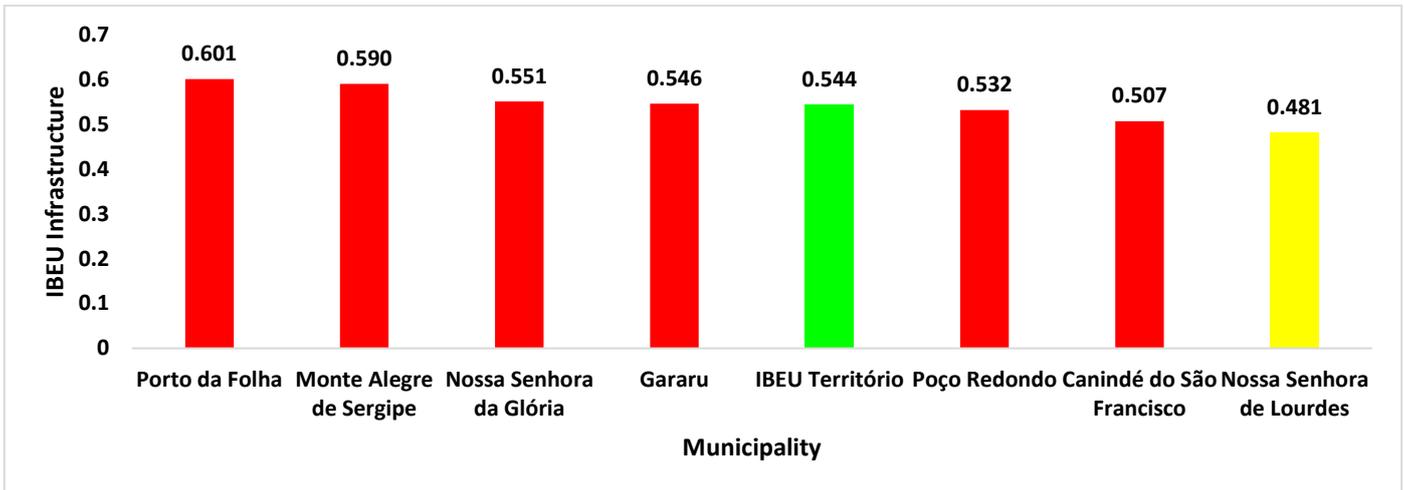
The dimension of urban services presents significant internal inequality, with a variation of 0.233 points between the highest and the lowest index. This result shows significant structural inequality in access to urban services, indicating the need for focused public policies and investments in sanitation and basic infrastructure.

The average IBEU of the dimension was 0.797, considered "medium", but close to the "good" threshold, which reinforces the need for more targeted public policies to expand access and quality of services, especially in more vulnerable municipalities, such as Nossa Senhora de Lourdes.

3.5 URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE (D5): THE MAIN BOTTLENECK (0.544 – POOR)

This dimension evaluates the basic elements of urbanization necessary for the planning of urban space and accessibility, such as sidewalks, pavement, curbs, public lighting, culverts, and universal accessibility devices. Figure 5 shows the infrastructure of the municipalities analyzed.

Figure 5 – Urban infrastructure



Source: Authorship (2026)

This is the most critical dimension for urban well-being, and the fact that the municipality with the best performance is still in the "poor" range points to a regional pattern of deprivation. Such a scenario requires urgent interventions by the government, since the aspects evaluated are fundamental for the dignity and quality of life of the population.

This is the main critical point in the territory analyzed. The indexes range from 0.481 (classified as "very bad" in Nossa Senhora de Lourdes) to 0.601 (classified as "bad" in Porto da Folha). All municipalities have a performance between the "very bad" and "bad" categories,

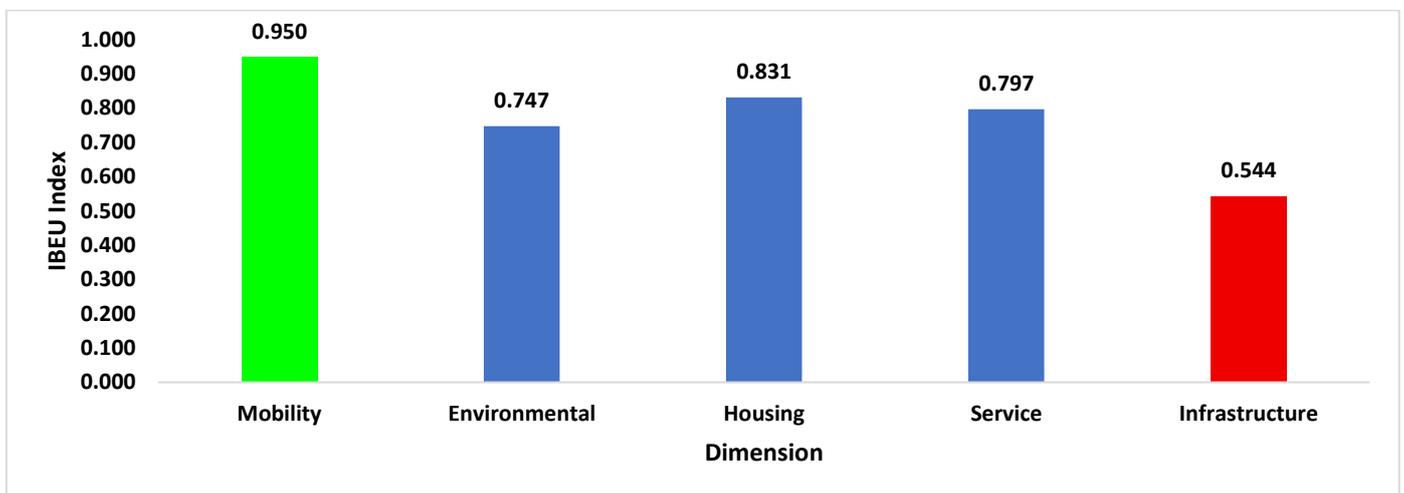
which reveals serious deficiencies in basic urban infrastructure.

The average IBEU of the dimension was 0.544, classified as "poor", evidencing significant structural challenges, such as absence of sidewalks, low lighting, deficiencies in sanitation, garbage collection, and accessibility.

3.6 GENERAL IBEU BY SIZE

The result of the research in relation to the dimensions can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6 – IBEU by dimensions



Source: Authorship (2026)

Figure 6 shows good conditions in the dimensions of mobility and housing, reasonable performance in environmental aspects and urban services, but reveals great vulnerability in basic infrastructure. Deficits are observed in the supply network, garbage collection, urban drainage, accessibility, and public lighting, which compromise both the quality of life and the potential for socioeconomic development of the territory.

3.7 ANALYSIS BY MUNICIPALITY

Porto da Folha (0.806 – BOM) is the leader in the dimension of urban services (0.891) and has the best performance in urban infrastructure, although it is still classified as poor. Thus, it becomes urgent to implement improvements in basic infrastructure. It is the most balanced municipality, with no significant concentrated weaknesses.

Poço Redondo (0.796 – Good) presents the best environmental conditions and high performance in urban services. It is the municipality with the lowest evaluation in the mobility dimension, only still classified as "good" (0.900), indicating a possible lower urban density and greater territorial dispersion.

Monte Alegre de Sergipe (0.788 – Medium) is configured as a balanced municipality, without positive or negative extremes. It presents stability in the different dimensions analyzed.

Canindé do São Francisco (0.775 – Medium) demonstrates strengths in mobility and high performance in urban services. However, it has the worst housing condition among the municipalities analyzed, in addition to deficient urban infrastructure. It is a municipality with a good environmental and mobility balance, but with a relative housing deficit and structural fragility in infrastructure.

Gararu (0.771 – Medium) has an average performance in almost all dimensions, with slight fragility in urban infrastructure and no major internal disparities.

Nossa Senhora da Glória (0.762 – Medium) has the best housing condition in the territory, but registers a "poor" performance in the environmental dimension. It has a consolidated urban center, but with significant environmental pressure, possibly associated with greater urbanization

Nossa Senhora de Lourdes (0.718 – Medium) is the municipality with the most critical situation, being the only one classified as "bad" in three dimensions. It presents serious problems in infrastructure (classified as "terrible"), urban services ("bad") and the environmental dimension ("bad"). It is a municipality with concentrated structural vulnerability, especially in services and infrastructure, despite the good performance in mobility and housing conditions.

3.8 WEAKNESSES AND FORTRESSES OF ALTO SERTÃO SERGIPANO TERRITORY

Regional strengths focus on the dimensions of urban mobility ("excellent" rating) and housing conditions (average to good performance). On the other hand, the persistent challenges refer to urban infrastructure (classified as poor/very bad) and environmental conditions, which present significant inequalities between municipalities.

The comparative summary, highlighting the strengths (dimensions with good/excellent performance) and weaknesses (dimensions with poor/very bad performance) of the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Strengths and weaknesses

Municipality	Strengths (Good/Great)	Weaknesses (Poor/Very Bad)
Canindé de São Francisco	Mobility (0.960 – Excellent); Services (0.809 – Good)	Infrastructure (0.507 – Poor)
Gararu	Mobility (0.952 – Excellent); Housing (0.839 – Medium/Good)	Infrastructure (0.546 – Poor)
Monte Alegre de Sergipe	Mobility (0.954 – Excellent); Housing (0.846 – Well)	Infrastructure (0.590 – Borderline Medium)
Nossa Senhora da Gloria	Mobility (0.961 – Excellent); Housing (0.864 – Good)	Environmental (0.662 – Poor); Infrastructure (0.551 – Poor)
Nossa Senhora de Lourdes	Mobility (0.959 – Great)	Infrastructure (0.507 – Very Bad (Environmental - Poor); Services (0.658 – Medium)
Poço Redondo	Mobility (0.900 – Excellent); Environmental (0.840 – Good); Services (0.888 – Good)	Infrastructure (0.532 – Poor)
Porto da Folha	Mobility (0.962 – Excellent); Services (0.891 – Good); Housing (0.818 – Medium/Good)	Infrastructure (0.601 – Medium/Low)

Source: Authorship (2026)

Table 4 shows that, in terms of recurrent strength, urban mobility is the main structural strength of the Alto Sertão Sergipano, with indices classified as excellent in all municipalities. This result confirms that commuting from

home to work is not the main obstacle to urban well-being in the region.

The second dimension with the greatest recurrence as a force is housing, especially in Gararu, Monte Alegre de

Sergipe, Nossa Senhora da Glória, and Porto da Folha, indicating that most of the population lives in housing considered adequate.

However, urban infrastructure appears as a weakness common to all municipalities, being classified as "bad" or "very bad" in all cases. This result reveals that paving, drainage, public lighting, and accessibility constitute the main structural bottleneck of the territory.

The environmental dimension also shows significant weaknesses, especially in the municipality of Nossa Senhora de Lourdes. As for the dimension of collective urban services, marked territorial inequalities are observed, with a positive highlight for Porto da Folha and Poço Redondo in contrast to the unsatisfactory performance of Nossa Senhora de Lourdes.

There are some municipal specificities: **Nossa Senhora da Glória** reveals a contradiction between strong

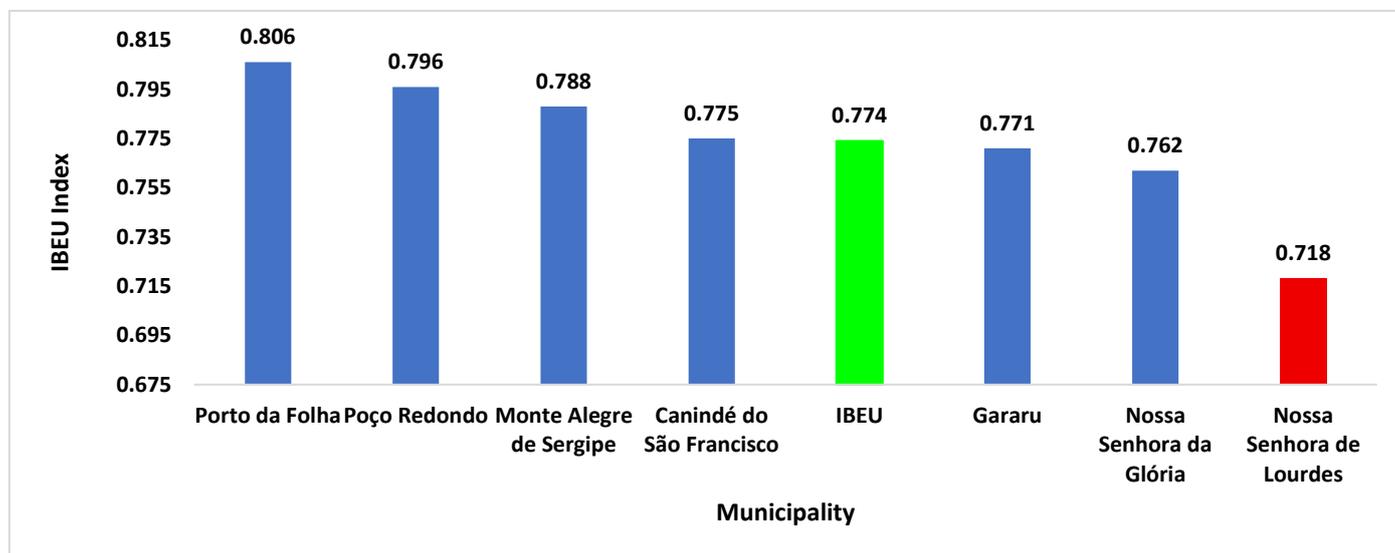
housing performance and environmental fragility. **Porto da Folha** is the most structurally balanced municipality, although it still has a deficiency in infrastructure. **Poço Redondo** has good environmental and service performance, differing from the regional standard. **Nossa Senhora de Lourdes** presents the most critical situation, concentrating weaknesses in infrastructure, environment, and services.

The main regional challenge, therefore, is not in the displacement or internal quality of the houses, but in the qualification of the urban public space.

3.9 GENERAL IBEU BY MUNICIPALITY

The IBEU of each municipality is shown in Figure 7, with emphasis on Porto da Folha and Poço Redondo, which had the best performance, while Nossa Senhora de Lourdes had the worst result among the municipalities analyzed.

Figure 7 - IBEU of the Alto Sertão Sergipano



Source: Authorship (2026)

The IBEU of the region is 0.774, close to the "good" range, although still classified as "medium", due to the strong inequality between the dimensions evaluated, with infrastructure being the main factor for downgrading the general index. In this sense, public policies should prioritize improvements in urban infrastructure and collective services as a strategy to raise the quality of life.

With regard to municipal performance, the best overall result was achieved by the municipality of Porto da Folha (0.806), classified as "good", standing out for its leadership in the dimensions of infrastructure (0.601) and collective urban services (0.891).

Poço Redondo had the second best performance (0.796), with emphasis on the environmental dimension, whose index was 0.840.

The other municipalities were classified at the "medium" level, which highlights the need for public actions aimed at promoting structural improvements capable of meeting the demands of the population. This intermediate classification reflects the concentration of urban quality of life at average levels, still marked by significant structural limitations.

Nossa Senhora de Lourdes had the worst overall performance, with an IBEU of 0.718, approaching the "bad" range. The dimensions that contributed most to this result were infrastructure (0.481) and collective urban services (0.658), both below the regional average.

The second worst performance was recorded in Nossa Senhora da Glória (0.762), with a negative highlight for the environmental dimension (0.662), which reveals relevant environmental weaknesses.

In terms of internal inequality, Porto da Folha and Poço Redondo stand out positively for the relative homogeneity between the dimensions, while Nossa Senhora de Lourdes appears as the most vulnerable municipality, especially in infrastructure and services.

In general, the precariousness of urban infrastructure is the main regional obstacle, negatively impacting the overall IBEU of the municipalities analyzed.

The discrepancies between the dimensions reveal both intermunicipal and intramunicipal inequalities, with some localities performing well in housing and services, while others face significant environmental and/or structural deficits. This fragmentation highlights failures in the distribution of public investments and the lack of integrated territorial management.

The Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory has as positive points the urban mobility (well consolidated) and the housing conditions (reasonable). However, marked inequalities in services, environmental fragilities, and precarious urban infrastructure persist. The municipalities of Porto da Folha and Poço Redondo, as they have the best performances, can serve as a reference for good practices, while Nossa Senhora de Lourdes requires priority attention, especially with regard to infrastructure and basic services.

4 PUBLIC POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results show the need to reorient regional public policies, with a focus on reducing socio-spatial inequalities. To this end, it is recommended:

- The implementation of structuring investments in basic infrastructure, especially in sanitation, public lighting, paving, and urbanization in the neediest areas of all municipalities, the most emergency situation being in Nossa Senhora de Lourdes;

- The elaboration of an integrated urban planning, with a focus on territorial equity and social inclusion;

- The strengthening of local governance, through the technical training of municipal teams and the encouragement of intermunicipal cooperation;

- Maintenance of excellent performance in mobility and housing conditions; e

- Continuous monitoring of urban indicators, using the IBEU as a strategic tool for planning and public management.

5 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Urban Well-Being Index (IBEU) in the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano Territory showed a picture marked by significant contrasts between the different dimensions evaluated. The average

regional index of 0.774, although close to the "good" range, reveals significant structural inequalities, especially with regard to urban infrastructure and collective services.

The results show that urban mobility and housing conditions are the main strengths of the territory, presenting satisfactory, and relatively homogeneous indicators among the municipalities. These data suggest that the smaller urban territorial extension and the proximity between residential spaces and urban centers favor the accessibility and quality of housing.

On the other hand, urban infrastructure is the main bottleneck in the region, with all municipalities classified between "bad" and "very bad" in this dimension. This fragility reflects deficiencies in basic aspects, such as paving, sanitation, pavement, and public lighting, essential elements for the promotion of quality of life.

The environmental dimension also presents challenges, especially in the municipalities of Nossa Senhora de Lourdes and Nossa Senhora da Glória, highlighting the need for public policies aimed at health, afforestation, and solid waste management. In addition, collective urban services reveal strong territorial inequality, indicating a concentration of investments in a few municipalities, such as Porto da Folha.

In general terms, the municipality of Porto da Folha had the best performance, followed by Poço Redondo, both classified as "good". Nossa Senhora de Lourdes recorded the lowest index of urban well-being, demanding priority attention from government agencies.

Given this scenario, the need for a more strategic, equitable, and territorially integrated public management, which considers local and regional specificities, becomes evident. The use of the IBEU as a planning and monitoring tool can help direct government actions and overcome the inequalities identified.

In summary, the study contributes to the understanding of the levels of urban well-being in the municipalities of the Alto Sertão Sergipano and reinforces the importance of urban planning as a fundamental instrument for the promotion of fairer, more sustainable and inclusive cities.

The limitation of the study lies in the dependence on secondary data available only up to certain years, 2010 to 2022, which may not reflect very recent transformations.

As future perspectives, it is suggested to carry out qualitative research with local residents to complement the quantitative data, as well as the continuous updating of the indices based on new census rounds. It is also possible to extend the methodology to other regions of the state.

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