

IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING FIRST IN PORTUGAL: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

18TH EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON HOMELESSNESS

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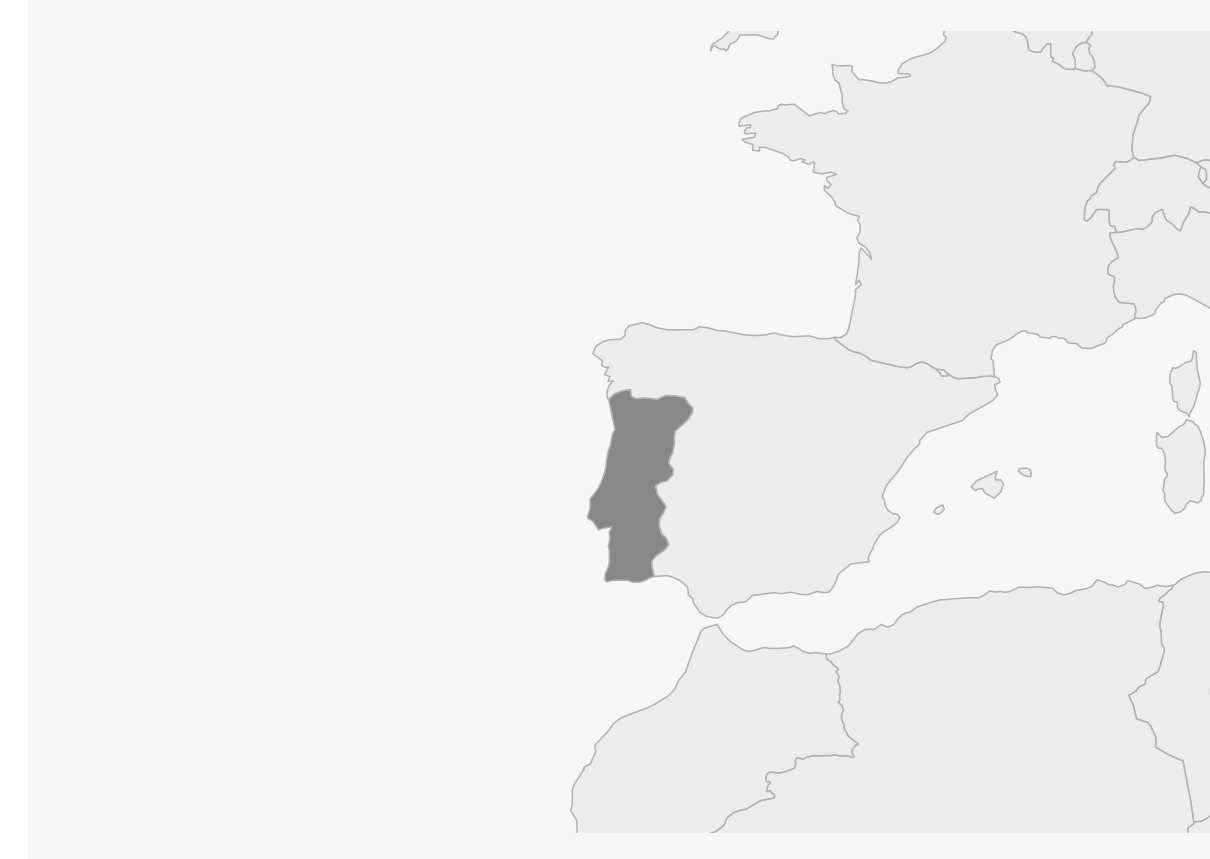
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INTRODUCTION

National context:

- In 2022, the Nacional Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (ENIPSSA), identified 10,773 homeless people: 5,975 roofless/ 4,798 houseless
- **Emergency and temporary accommodation** still forms the bulk of homelessness services in Portugal
- The positive results and the international recognition of the Housing First (HF) approach, led to the **dissemination of this program in Portugal.**

How is it being implemented and disseminated, what are the results of the Housing First model in Portugal, particularly regarding the community integration of participants?



PRINCIPLES OF HOUSING FIRST



Housing is a human right



Choice and control for service users



Separation of housing and treatment



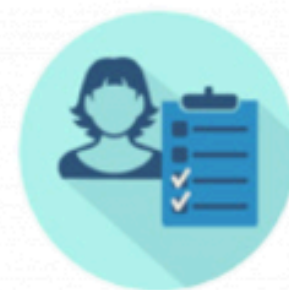
Recovery orientation



Harm reduction



Active engagement without coercion



Person-centred planning



Flexible Support for as Long as is Required



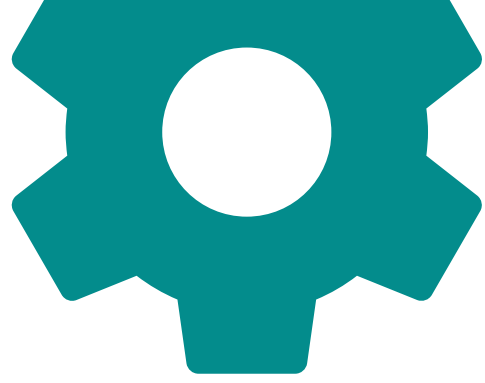
LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a growing body of literature which finds that ***Housing First provides an effective solution*** to homelessness among people with high and complex needs (Pleace, 2019)

High fidelity Housing First to the model achieve better results in terms of **housing stability, quality of life and community integration** (Greenwood et al, 2013; O'Campo et al, 2022)

In Portugal, studies focus on **programs implemented in Lisbon** or result from international comparative studies on fidelity to the model (Greenwood et al, 2013; Ornelas et al, 2014).

On the other hand, research findings indicate that it has mixed or poor effectiveness in helping individuals integrate into their communities following homelessness (Marshall et al., 2020)



METHODOLOGY

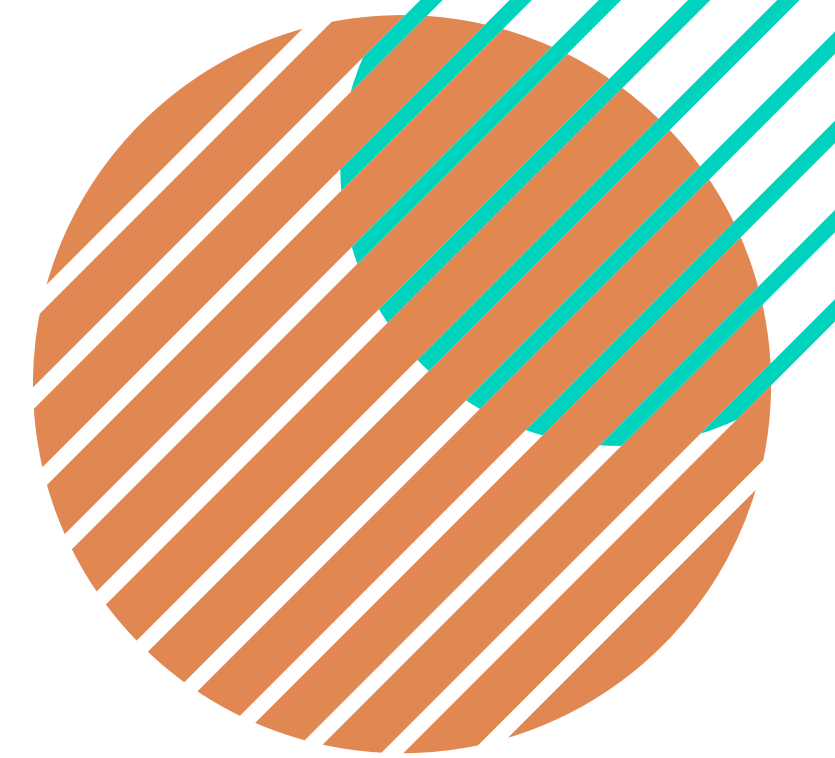
Mixed methods

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY
WITH HF PROJECT
MANAGERS

CITIZEN JURIES WITH
PARTICIPANTS

SEMI-STRUCTURED
INTERVIEWS WITH
PARTICIPANTS

exploratory phase





**MODEL IN
PORTUGAL
OR
PORTRAIT OF HF IN
PORTUGAL**

PHASES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF HF IN PORTUGAL

1

2009

CASAS PRIMEIRO was the first HF Project
AEIPS, a non-profit organization

2

2017

the National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (2017-2023) recognizes HF as a good initiative of social innovation to address homelessness

3

2021

1st Nacional Housing First conference

4

2021

Social Security Institute finances the teams

5

2023

2nd Nacional Housing First conference

6

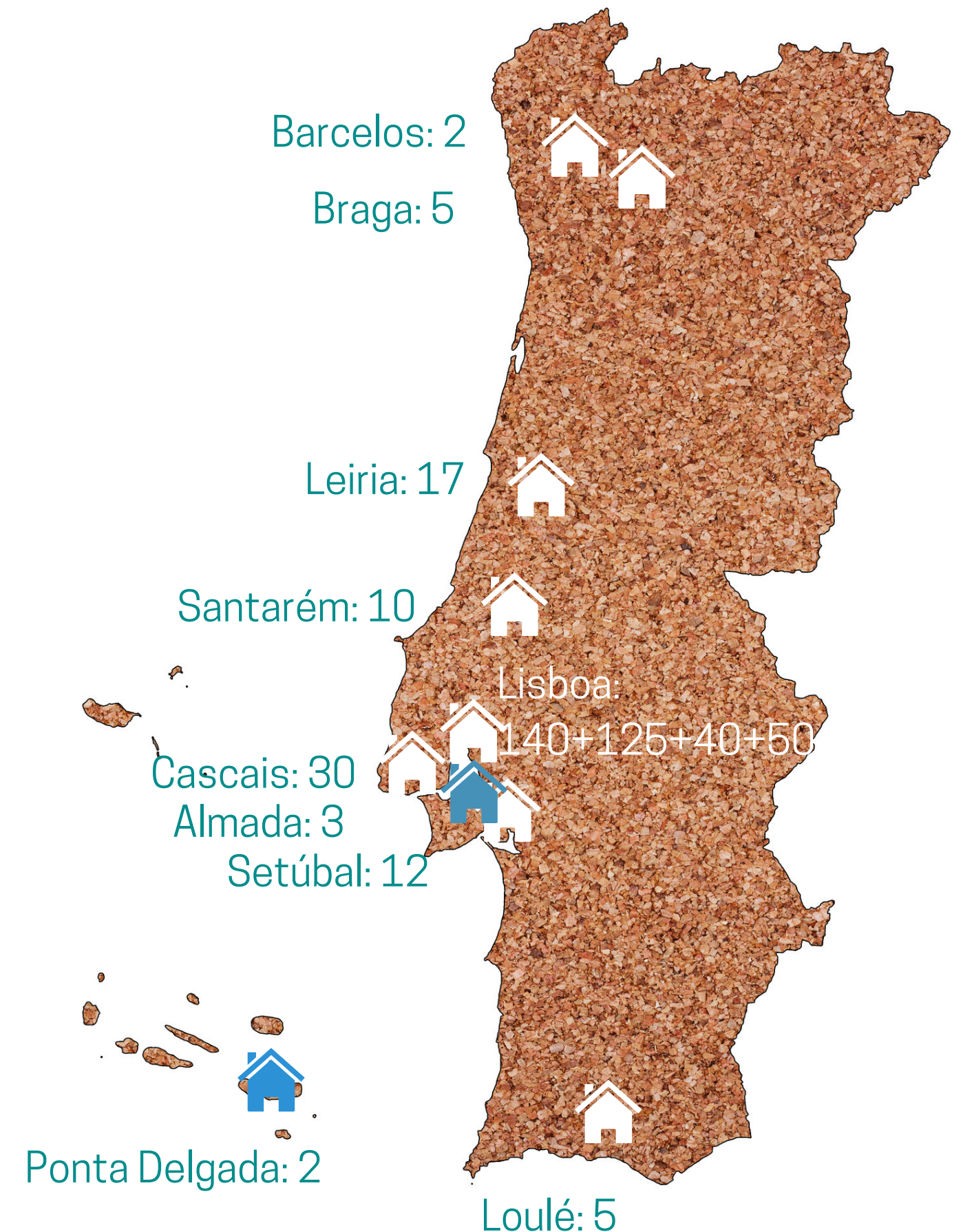
2024

10 cities
13 projects
+
Housing First Portugal National Network



1. PORTRAIT OF ORGANIZATIONS

- **Implemented HF in 10 cities:**
 - 13 non-profit organizations
 - Almost all of the Housing First provision in Portugal is in Lisbon
 - Previous experience with housing services for people living on the streets
- **Different funds that support the projects:**
 - Social security institute
 - Municipalities
 - private funds
- About 456 tenants

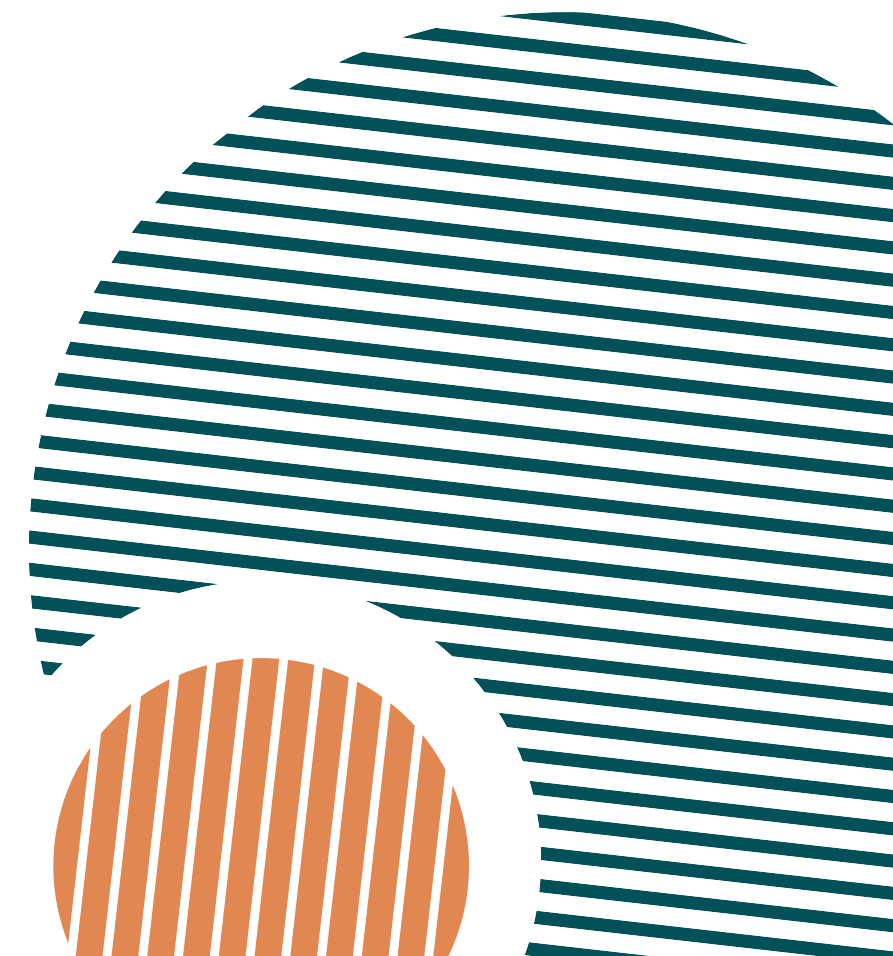


Source: Social Security Institute (ENIPSSA: 2024) and questionnaire (2 projects without funds from Social Security)

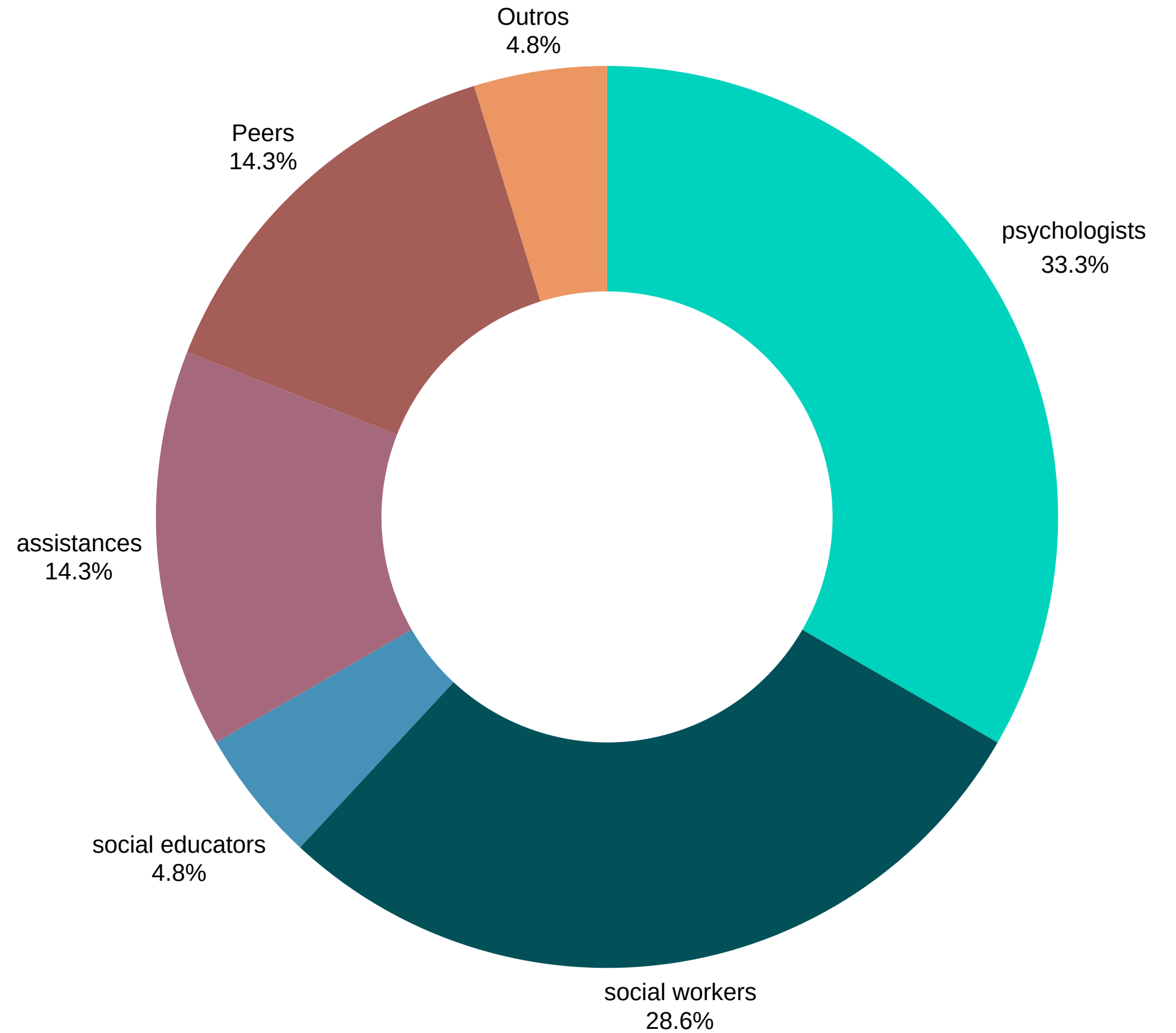


2. HOUSING PROCESS AND STRUCTURE

- Participants are housed in **independent, permanent** and **scattered-site** apartments
 - The apartments are rented from **the private housing market**
 - **Without preconditions** or requirements for mental illness treatment or drugs
 - The participants pay **30% of their income**
 - Some services promote participants' choice of housing.
-
- Ongoing flexible support
 - Harm reduction approach
 - Weekly Visits
 - support is available 24/7



3. TEAM STRUCTURE

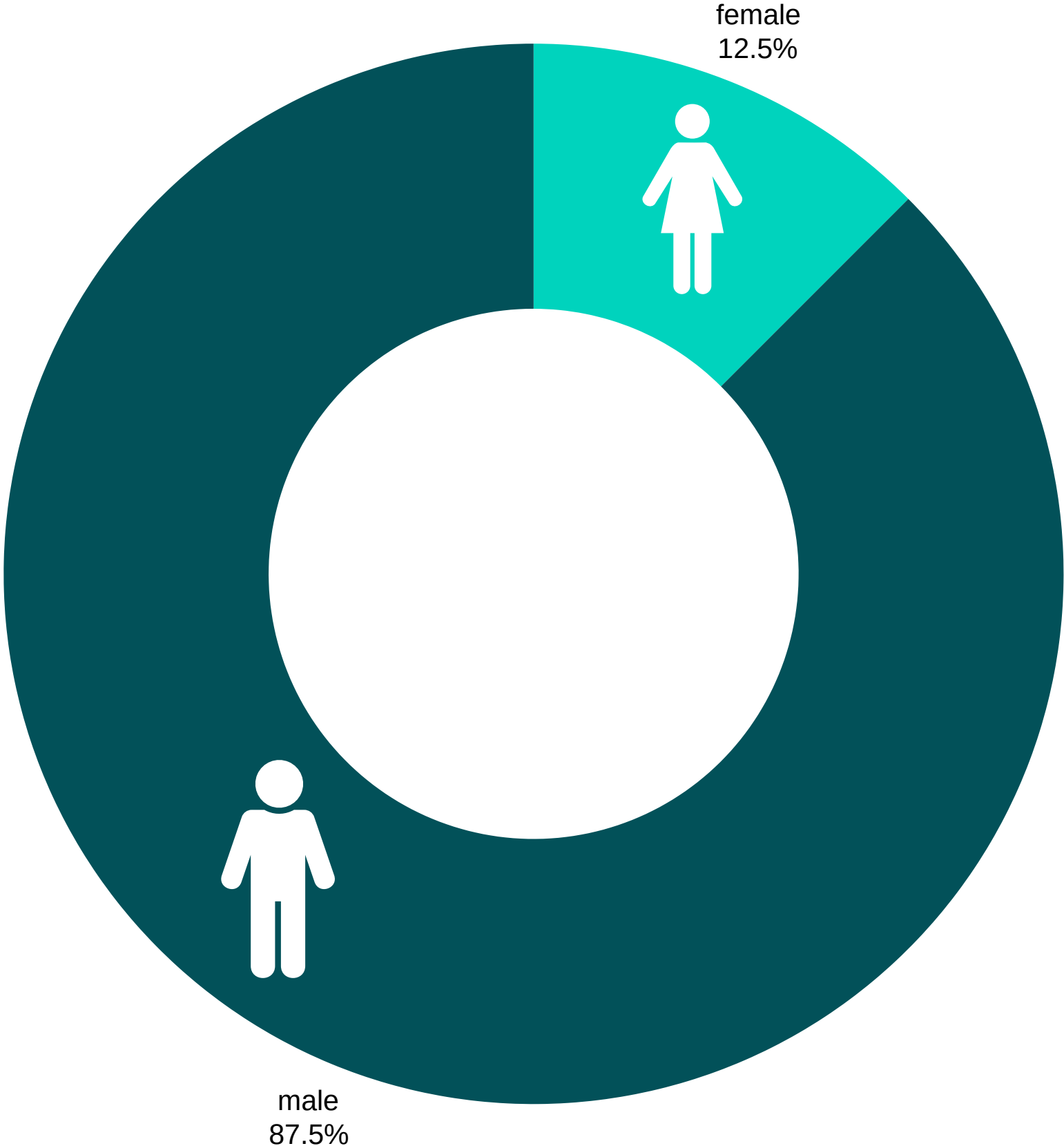


- The program team is composed by professionals from social and human sciences and some services have peers as team members
- ratio 1/10

4. PORTRAIT OF THE TENANTS

GENDER

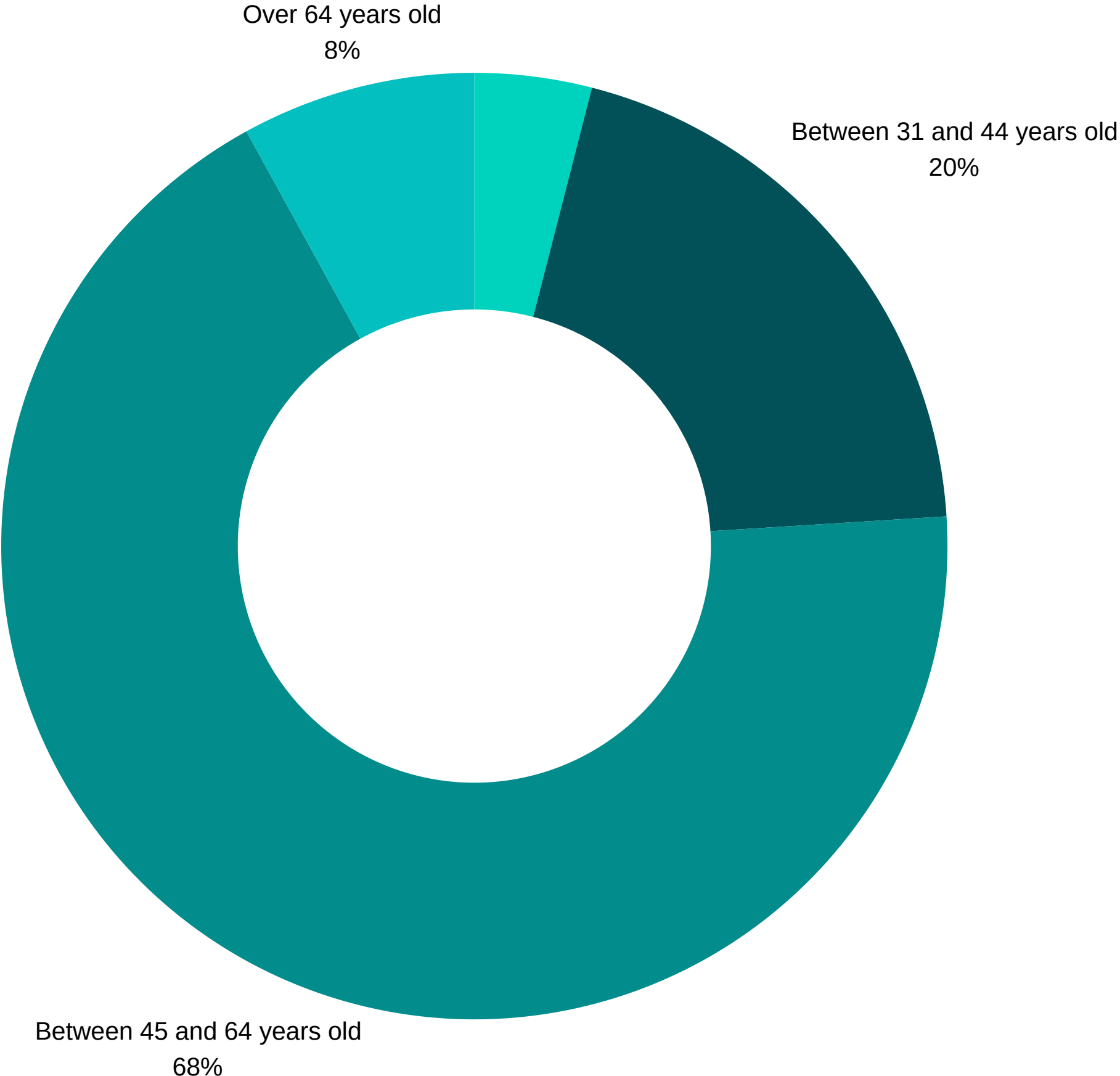
- FEMALE
- MALE
- OTHER



4. PORTRAIT OF THE TENANTS

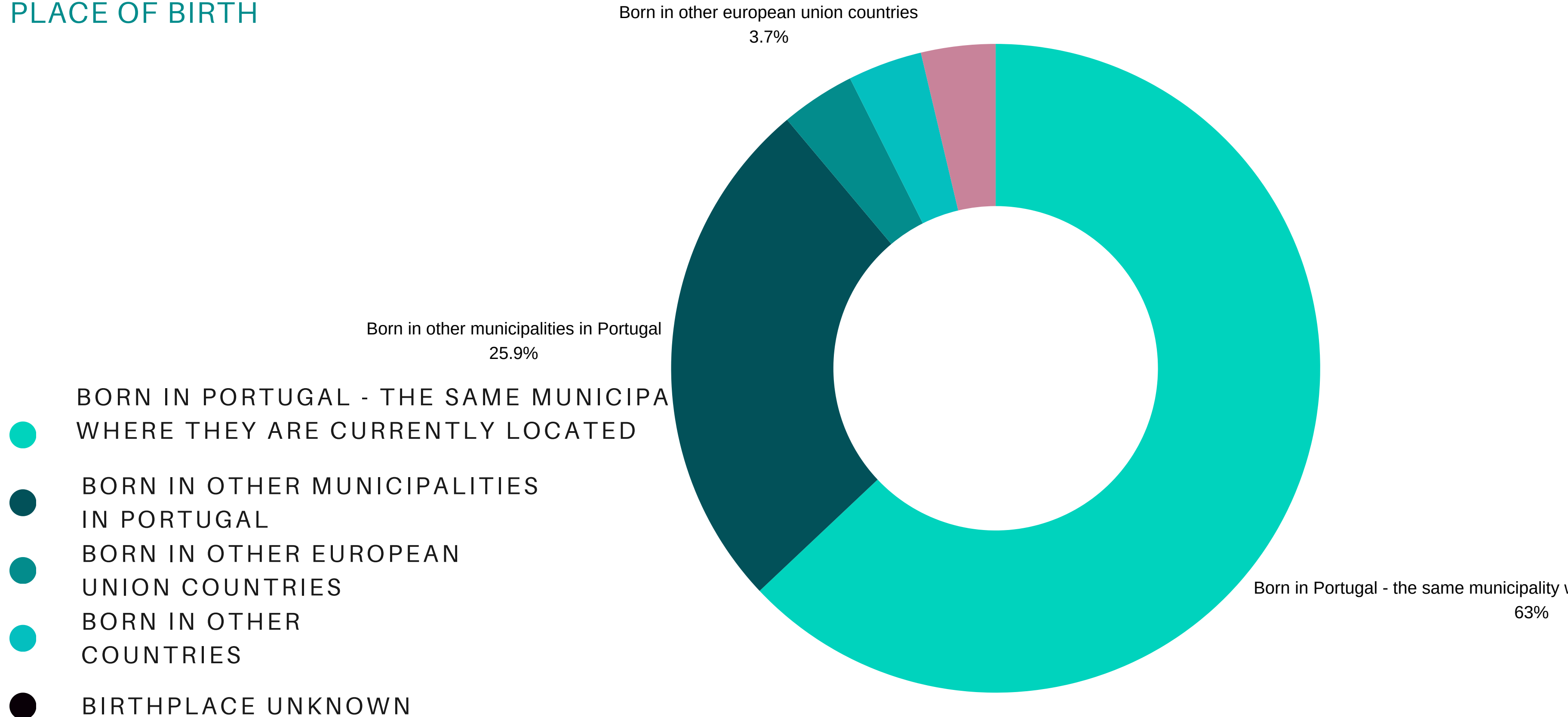
AGE

- BETWEEN 18 AND 30 YEARS OLD
- BETWEEN 31 AND 44 YEARS OLD
- BETWEEN 45 AND 64 YEARS OLD
- OVER 64 YEARS OLD
- NO INFORMATION



4. PORTRAIT OF THE TENANTS

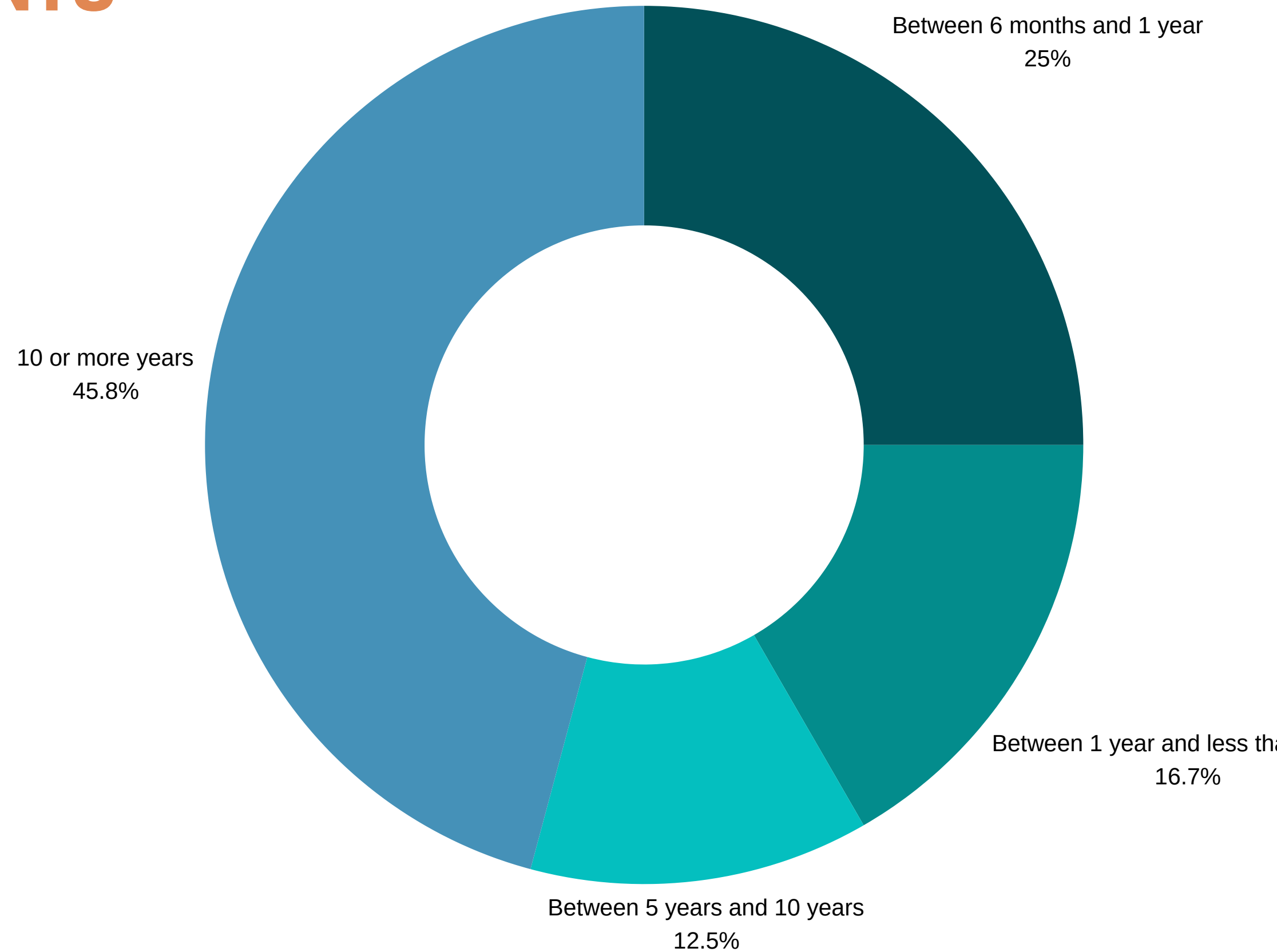
PLACE OF BIRTH



4. PORTRAIT OF THE TENANTS

TIME ON THE STREET

- LESS THAN 6 MONTHS
- BETWEEN 6 MONTHS AND 1 YEAR
- BETWEEN 1 YEAR AND 5 YEARS
- BETWEEN 5 YEARS AND 10 YEARS
- 10 OR MORE YEARS
- UNKNOWN TIME



Long-term homeless people with many vulnerabilities



5. MAIN IMPACT

- Greater engagement in healthcare and subsequent health improvement;
- Reduction or stabilisation in substance use
- Reduction of psychiatric symptoms
- Improved physical and psychological health
- Improved perceived quality of life
- Increased feelings of security, stability, and privacy
- Enhancement of autonomy and responsibility conditions
- High housing retention rate: 80%/ 90% did not return to their previous situation





6. DIFFICULTIES/ CHALLENGES

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of funding for housing first programs
- Lack of training and supervision
- Staff turnover
- The sustainability of the projects **implies the combination of public and private funds to support the projects**
- Prejudice and stigma by the landlords/ community



7. GOOD PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

- Providing individualized supports
- Community-based services
- Promoting social relationships (friends, family, neighbourhood...)
- Promoting leisure/ social-cultural activities
- Promoting socio-professional integration or volunteering
- Social and health collaborative network

CONCLUSIONS

- Preliminar findings have highlighted **some limitations of this study:**
 - 1) We have only the projects managers point of view
 - 2) Data of Housing First services are variable and contradictory (the data presented was provided by the Social Security Institute/ National Strategy and from a survey with HF project managers)
- In Portugal, the Housing First services have been increasing, but exist on a **small scale** and a part of municipal homelessness strategies
- The National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People recognizes HF as a good initiative of social innovation to address homelessness **but the Social Security Institute only finances the team**



CONCLUSIONS

- The preliminar results of this survey suggest that Housing First also works in Portugal and have **positive impacts in the life of the tenants** (even if there is a need for greater depth)
- **Community integration** require the development of intervention strategies at the individual and community level (*a discontinuous process*)
- The dissemination of this program in Portugal implies a greater dispersion across cities with a high number of people experiencing Homelessness (eg: Porto) and the finances of all parts of this programme
- This exploratory study provides clues to the need for further development of the implementation of the model in Portugal



NEXT STEPS

Talking with Housing First participants (mixed methods)
Analyse the fidelity to the principals
Exploring strategies and best practices
of *community integration*

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THANK YOU

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