

INNOVATION IN HOUSING FIRST – A SOCIAL REAFFILIATION PROJECT IN BELGIUM

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OUTLINE

1. Short history of Housing First in Belgium
2. Social-(re-)affiliation - sociological contextualisation
3. Research methodology
4. Advanced results
5. Conclusion

HOUSING FIRST IN BELGIUM IN A NUTSHELL

- Individualised case work : opening up rights to homeless people
- First experimentation in 2013 - 2016 in the framework of the Federal Plan to Fight Poverty: implemented in 5 large cities at the beginning.
 - Supported by Housing First Lab
- Logic contrary to the so-called "staircase logic": First people are brought back into housing, without conditions, to move towards recovery and maintenance in housing
- Housing First: 141 tenants and 93% retention in housing after 2 years
- Unconditional but individualised care: Loneliness, social isolation
- New experiment started in February 2020: "social affiliation process among HF tenants: development of new methodologies": 7 test projects (Liège, Charleroi, Namur, Brussels, Gent, Kortrijk, Limburg)

SOCIAL AFFILIATION : BEYOND HOUSING

- Social re-affiliation': a prerequisite for exiting homelessness
 - Importance of the notion of social ties and questioning of a simplified notion of housing
 - Social workers' observations: loneliness, social isolation, etc.
 - Post-housing services are increasingly present

SOCIAL AFFILIATION: THEORETICALLY

- Concept directly linked to that of social disaffiliation: much studied in (French) sociology
- In his analysis, Castel establishes *"a strong correlation between the place occupied in the social division of labour and participation in sociability networks and protection systems that 'cover' an individual in the face of the hazards of life"*.
- This distribution of places is approached by Castel through different "zones" of social cohesion:
 - firstly, the integration zone is marked by the association of stable work with solid relational integration. However, this zone is also marked by the fear that unemployment may affect the most stable;
 - Secondly, ever larger sections of the population are at risk of falling into precariousness, social vulnerability being defined as 'an intermediate, unstable zone, which combines the precariousness of work and the fragility of local support';
 - **Thirdly, Castel refers to the lack of capacity to integrate, i.e. the exclusion of categories of the population who are therefore in a position of "social disaffiliation".**

SOCIAL AFFILIATION: THEORETICALLY

- Importance of the social bond: Gardella
- Even if homeless people are excluded (Gardella, 2019: 3), this does not necessarily include a situation of total social exclusion.

'It is clear that exclusion from certain strongly integrating social groups in modern societies (such as family, profession and employment, but also politics and religion) increases the risks of experiencing material and relational hardship. [...] The sociological analysis of the refusal of accommodation proves that desocialisation towards certain groups, in situations of exclusion and poverty, is only one stage of a more general process, which continues with resocialisation in new groups or collectives; even if these are less valued and structured (and therefore less visible) than the most institutionalised social ties (such as the family, work, political and religious associations, etc.).' (Gardella, 2019: 3)

SERGE PAUGAM – THEORY OF SOCIAL BONDS

Type of social bond	Forms of protection	Forms of recognition
Bond of filiation (between parents and kids, family)	Count on intergenerational solidarity Close protection	Affective recognition
Elective participation bond	Elective being together « entre-soi » (Friends, relatives, associations, etc.)	Count on each other Affective recognition or based on similitudes
Organic participation bond	Stable employment Contractualised protection	Recognition through work and social esteem
Citizenship bond	Juridic protection (civil, political and social rights) based on the principle of equality	recognition of the individual's sovereignty

FOCUS ON SIX LIVING DOMAINS

- Relationship to housing - daily life
- Neighbourhood - city - mobility
- Social relations
- Health
- Leisure/socio-cultural activities
- Income/socio-professional integration/training/volunteering

A TOOL FOR OBJECTIFYING SOCIAL WORK - PROJECT DATA

- At project level (based on a questionnaire sent to the coordination)
 - Collective actions with people housed in Housing First
 - Actions in direct consultation functions with other services (service networks).
 - Actions in relation to a larger territorial scale (local social policy, region, regulatory framework, etc.)

A TOOL FOR OBJECTIFYING SOCIAL WORK – HOUSED PEOPLE DATA

- At the level of individuals (based on a questionnaire sent to Housing First project 'teams')
 - Demographic variables (age, gender, household type)
 - Type of dwelling, lease,
 - Income
 - Known illnesses and treatment
 - Diploma
 - 6 areas of social affiliation

1.1 Rapport au logement- vie quotidienne

Domaine	Accompagnement classique et/ou HF affiliation	Appréciation de réalisation 0 = « pas du tout » et 3 « tout à fait »	Prévu	Brève description
Administratif	HF ☐ HF-AFF ☐	0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐	oui ☐ non ☐	
Relogement chercher et garder un logement	HF ☐ HF-AFF ☐	0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐	oui ☐ non ☐	
Logement Entretien et appropriation du logement	HF ☐ HF-AFF ☐	0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐	oui ☐ non ☐	

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH THE COACHES INVOLVED IN THE VARIOUS PROJECTS

- Highlight the specificities of the support in relation to what is already being done in the projects
- Identify the impact of the organizational context on the deployment of this support
- Highlight the partnerships that are formed as a result of the support and the way in which they contribute to the empowerment of the people concerned
- Other...

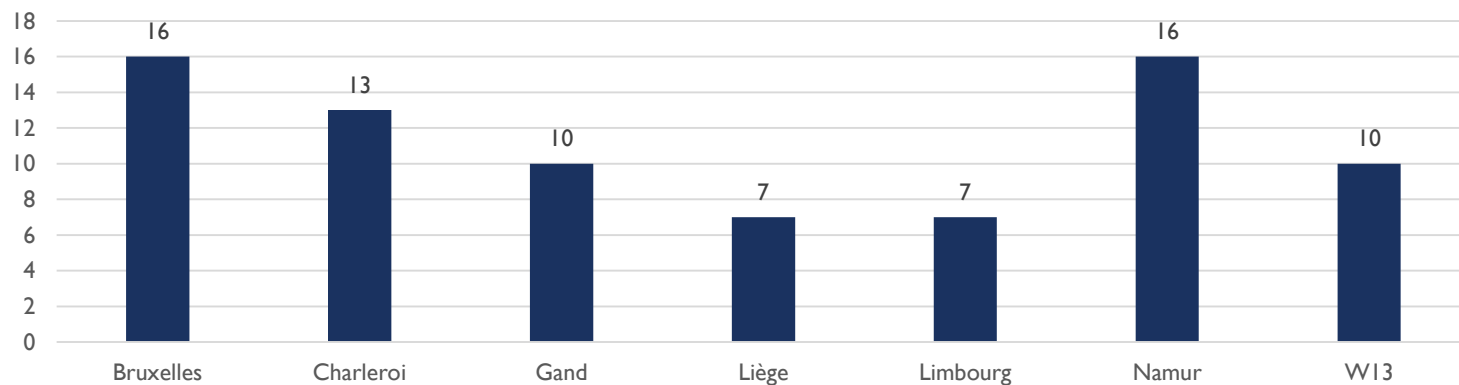
+ focus groups

THE STAKES OF SOCIAL AFFILIATION FOR HOUSED PEOPLE

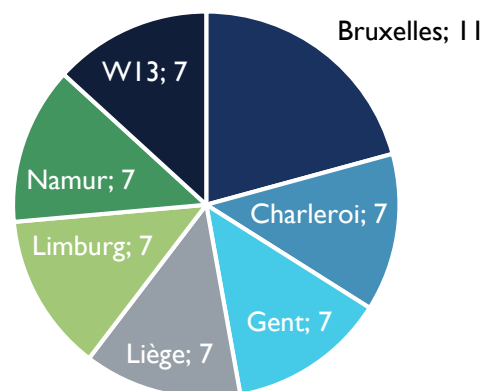
- It can be particularly difficult to leave the habits developed on the street where forms of recognition and support have been established,
- Sustainable entry into housing and social affiliation are part of the same process, the success of which is to feel 'at home'.
- Sociologist Pascale Pichon highlights four essential properties of 'home': accommodation, attachment, ownership and anchorage ('4As').

RESPONS

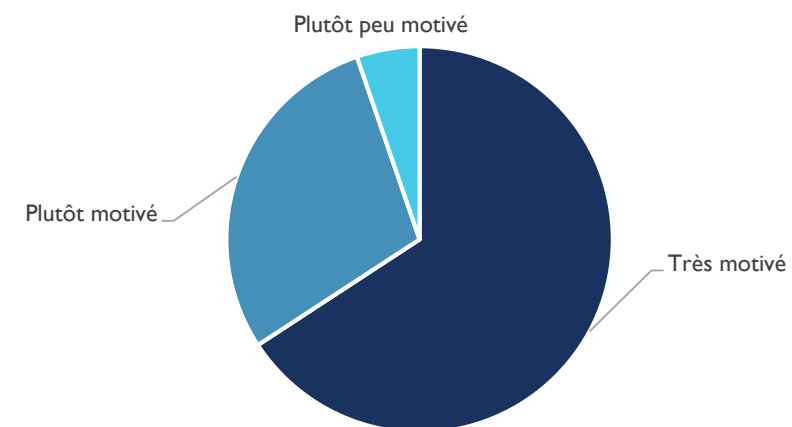
Responses from social workers



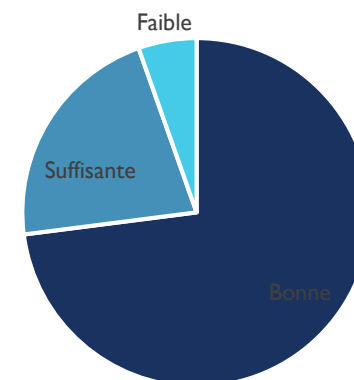
Interviews done by researchers



Motivation to participate



Evaluation from researchers about the capacity to understand the questions

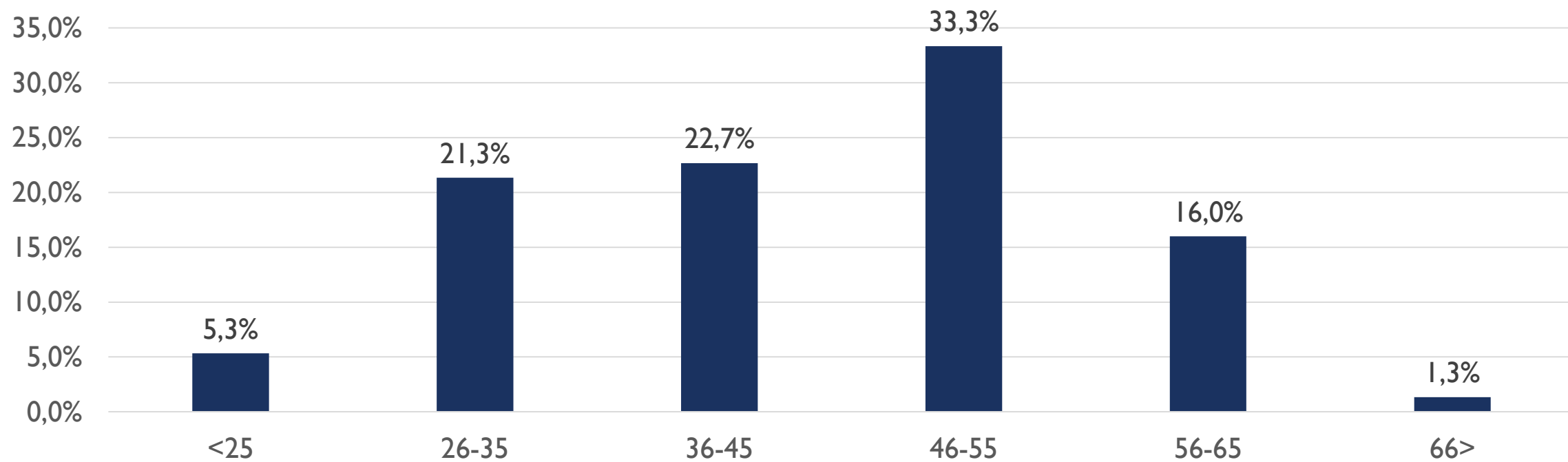


GLOBAL DATA

- Nationality: 81 Belgium, 4 Morocco, 1 Algeria, 1 Turkey
- Birth: 70 Belgium, 1 Algeria, 1 Colombia, 2 Hungary, 6 Morocco, 1 Poland, 1 Turkey, 1 Macedonia
- Sex: Men 62 (73.8%), Women 22 (26.1%)
- Resident partner: 89.2% no (Companion 8; friend 2)
- Children: sometimes custody, often little/no contact; placement
- 21.4% have pets

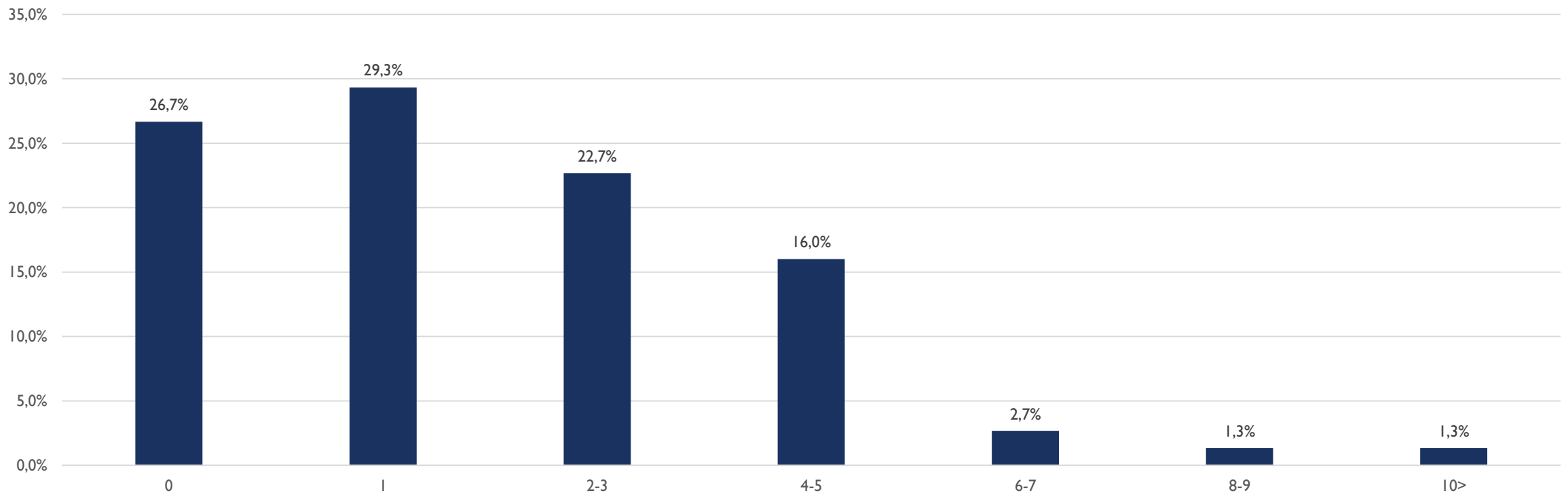
AGE

Age

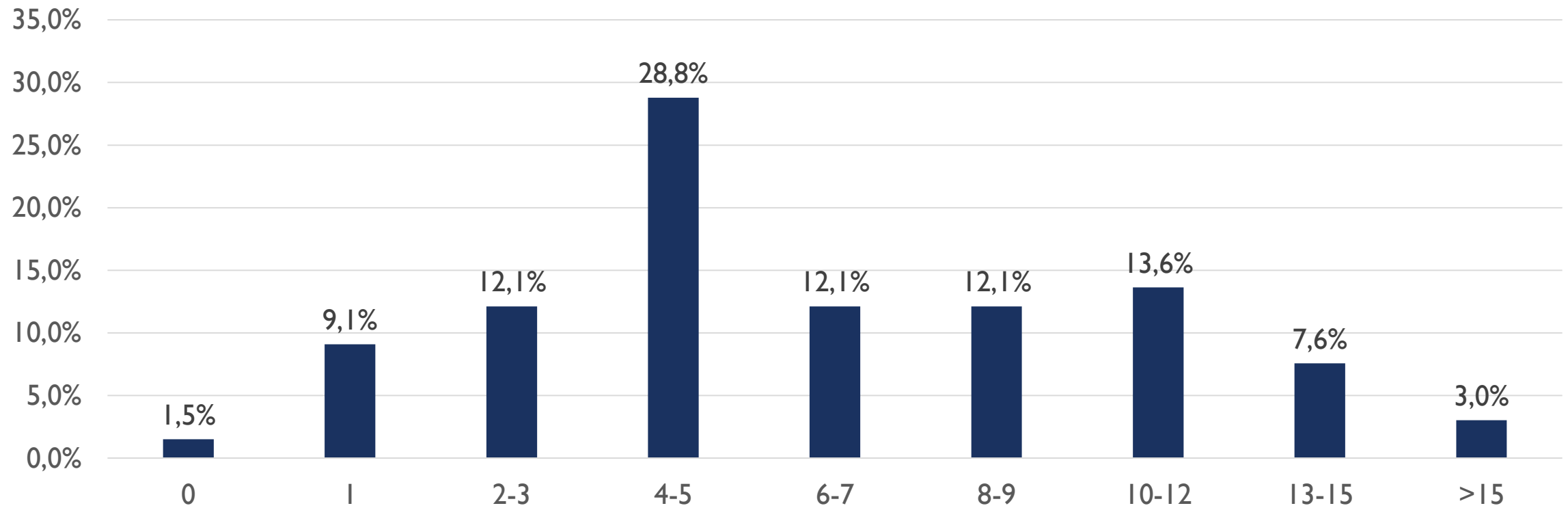


DURATION OF BEING HOUSED

Duree dans le logement - années



DURATION ON THE STREET

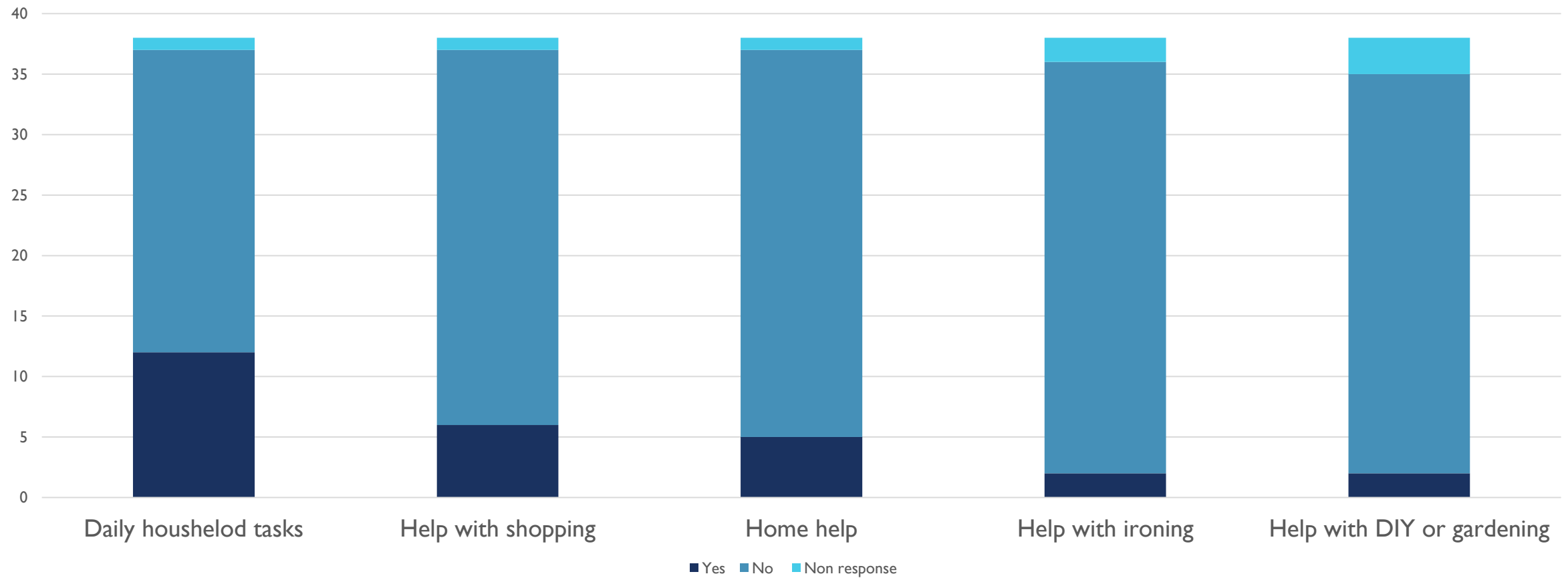




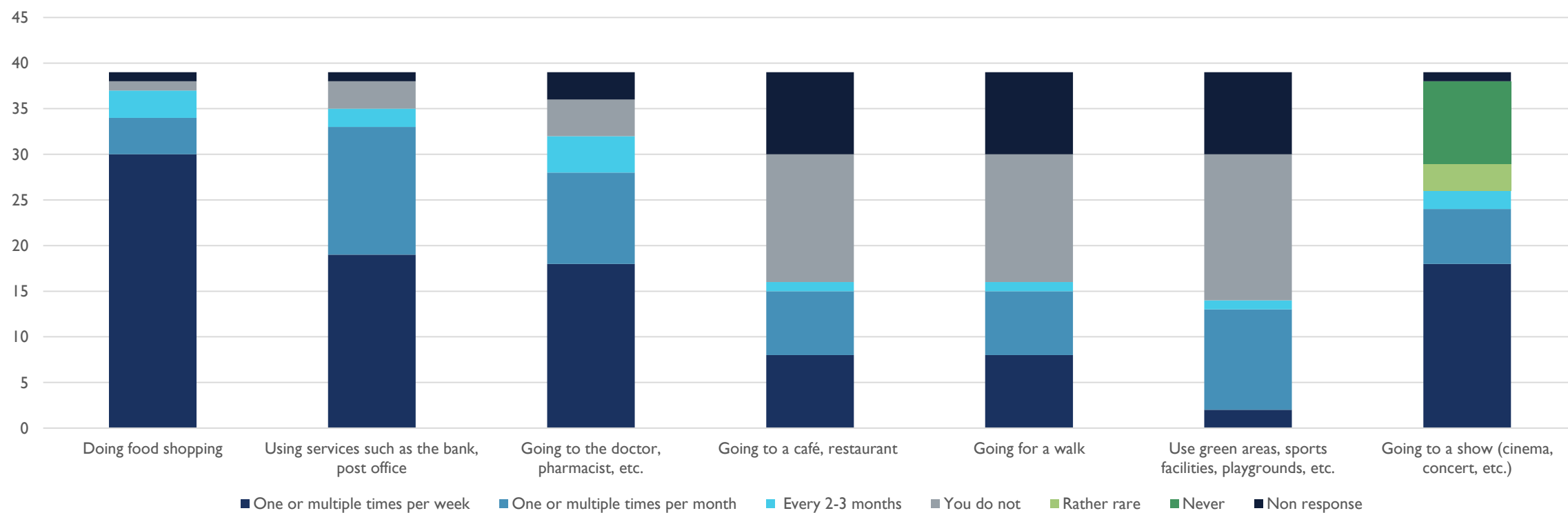
SHORT OVERVIEW OF LIVING DOMEINS



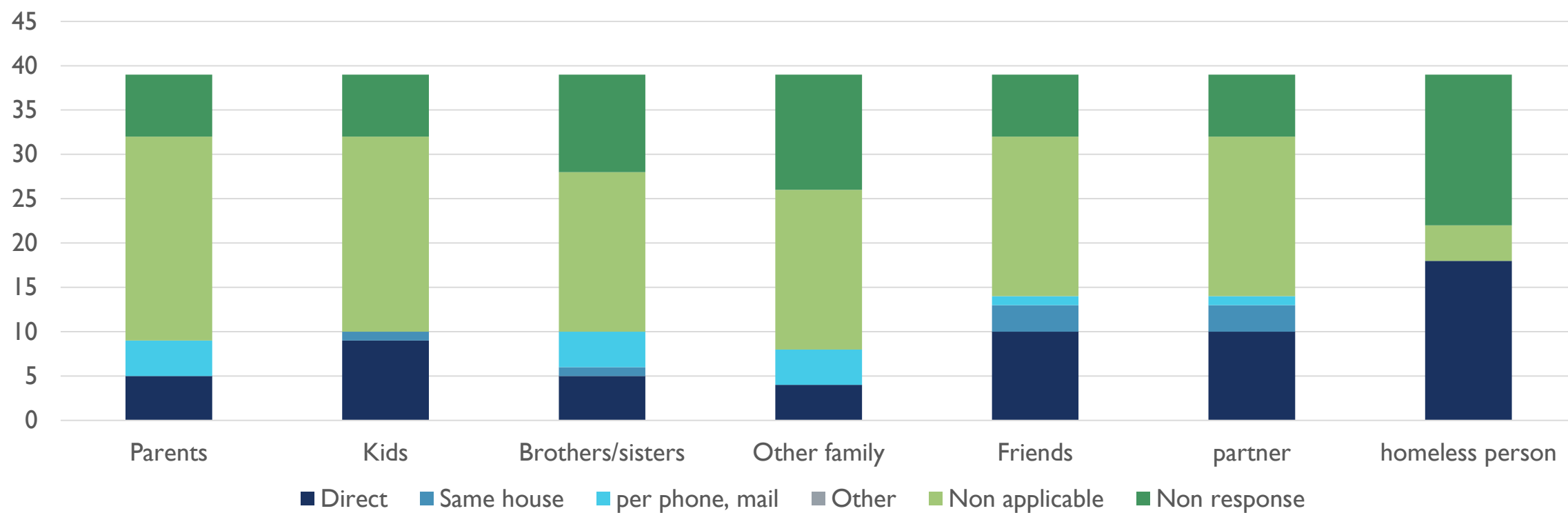
DAILY LIVING SUPPORT



ACTIVITES IN THE SURROUNDINGS/THE CITY

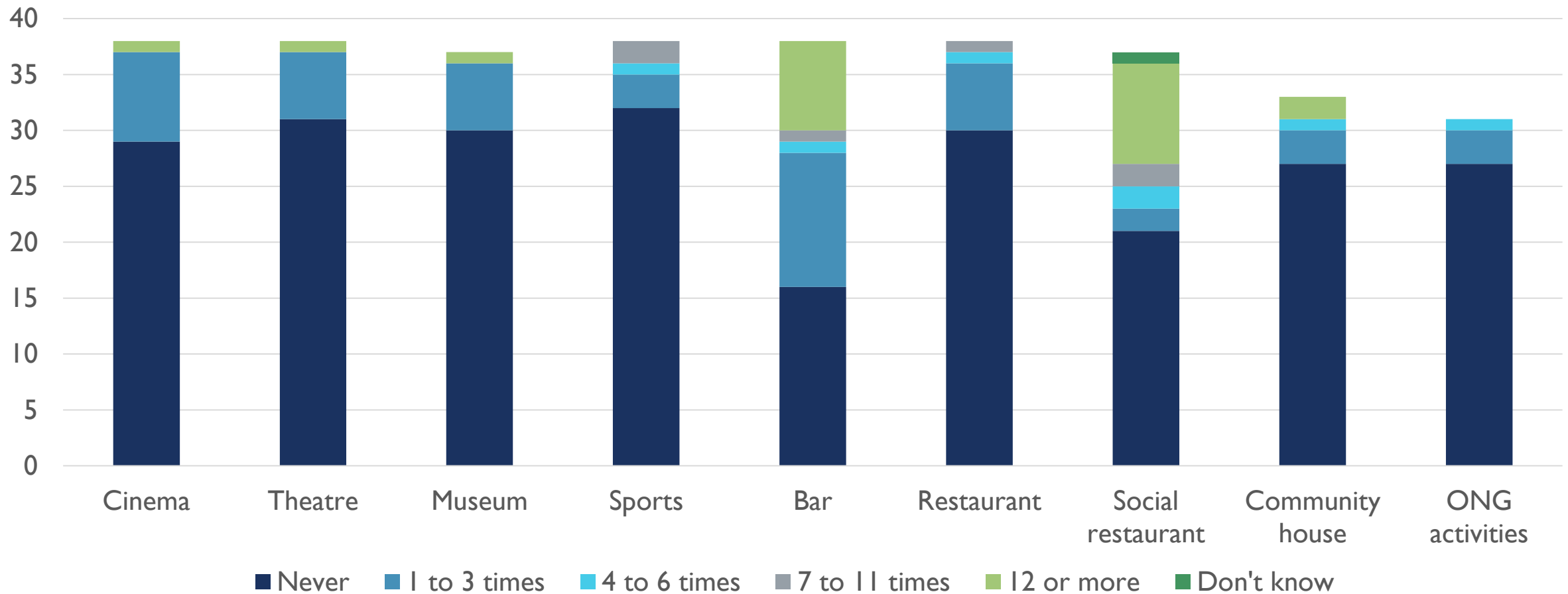


RELATIONS WITH RELATIVES



+ Très faible réponse quant à la possibilité de pouvoir compter sur ces catégories de personnes

SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES





TYPES OF SOCIAL TIES AND PROJECT ACTIONS

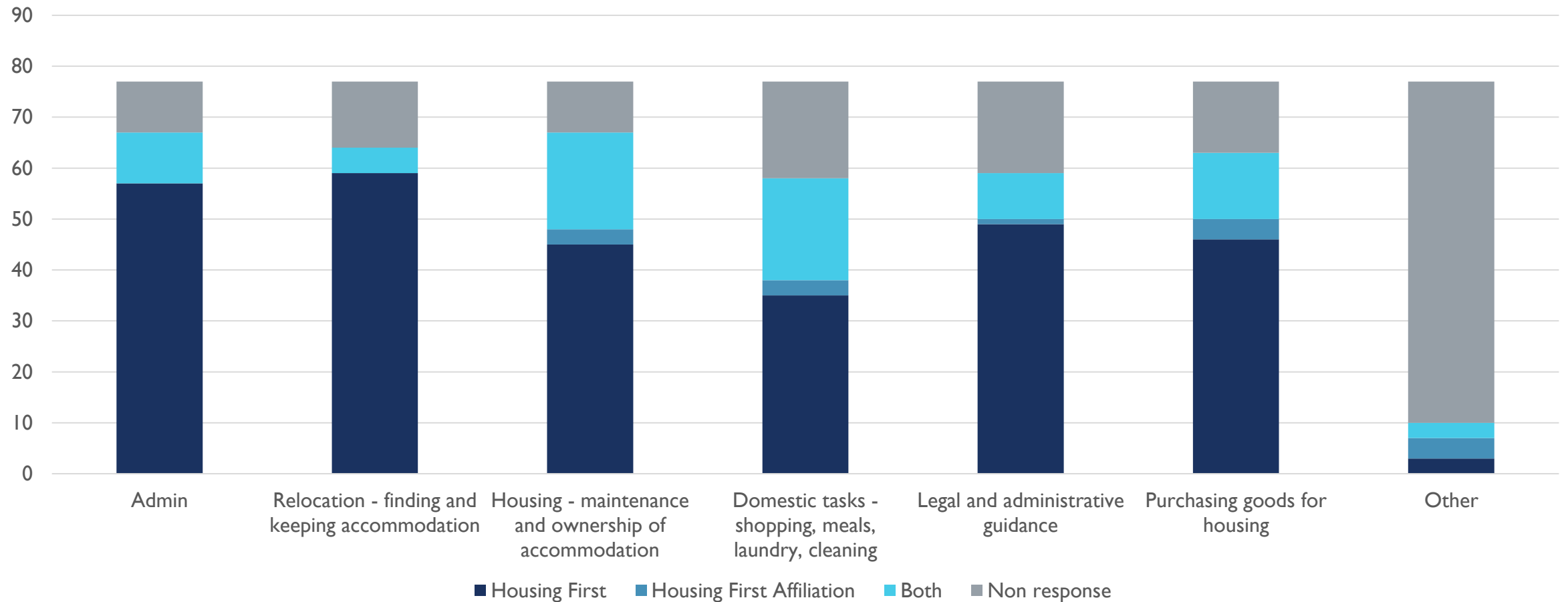
FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES COMPLETED BY THE TEAMS



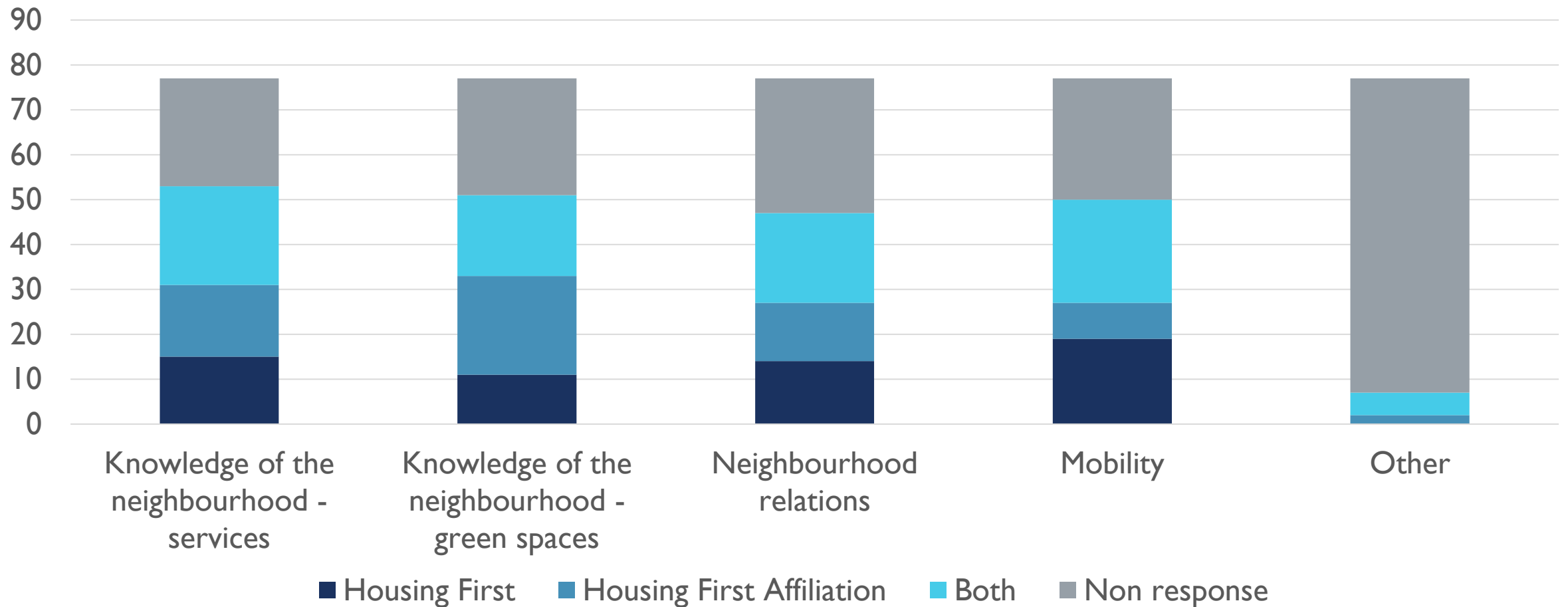
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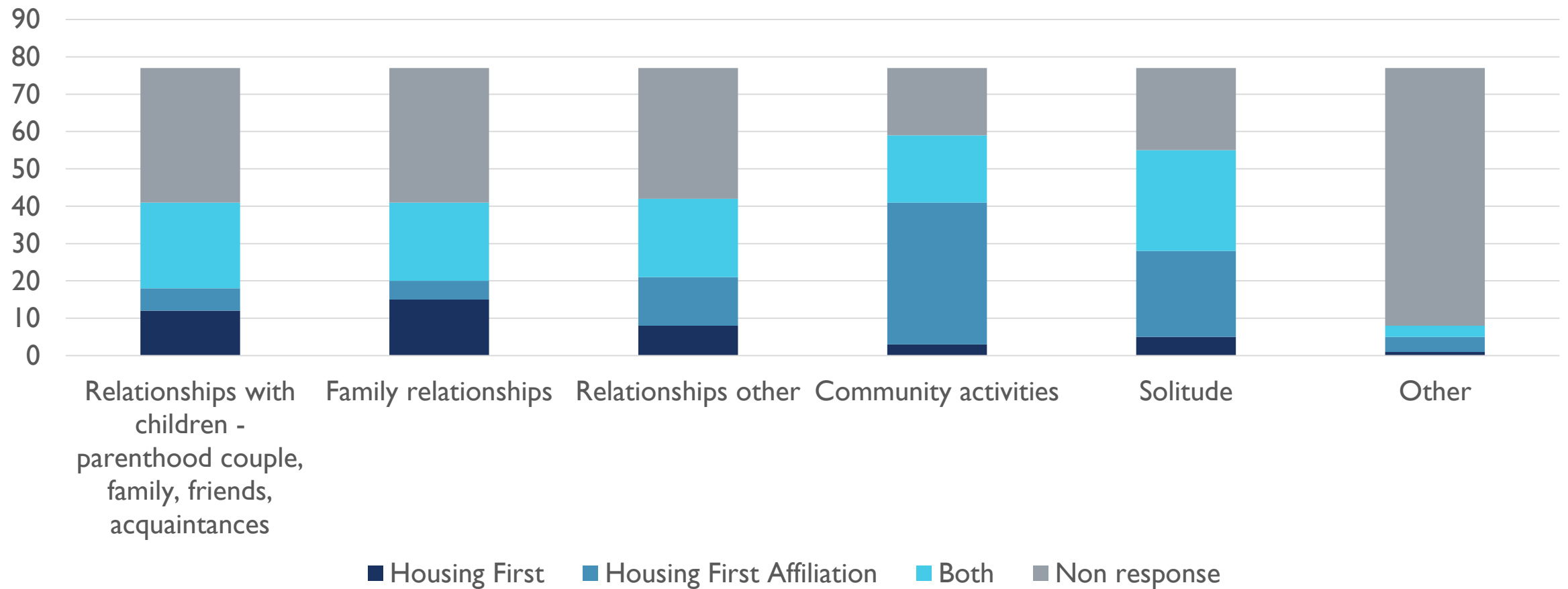
RELATIONSHIP TO HOUSING - DAILY LIFE



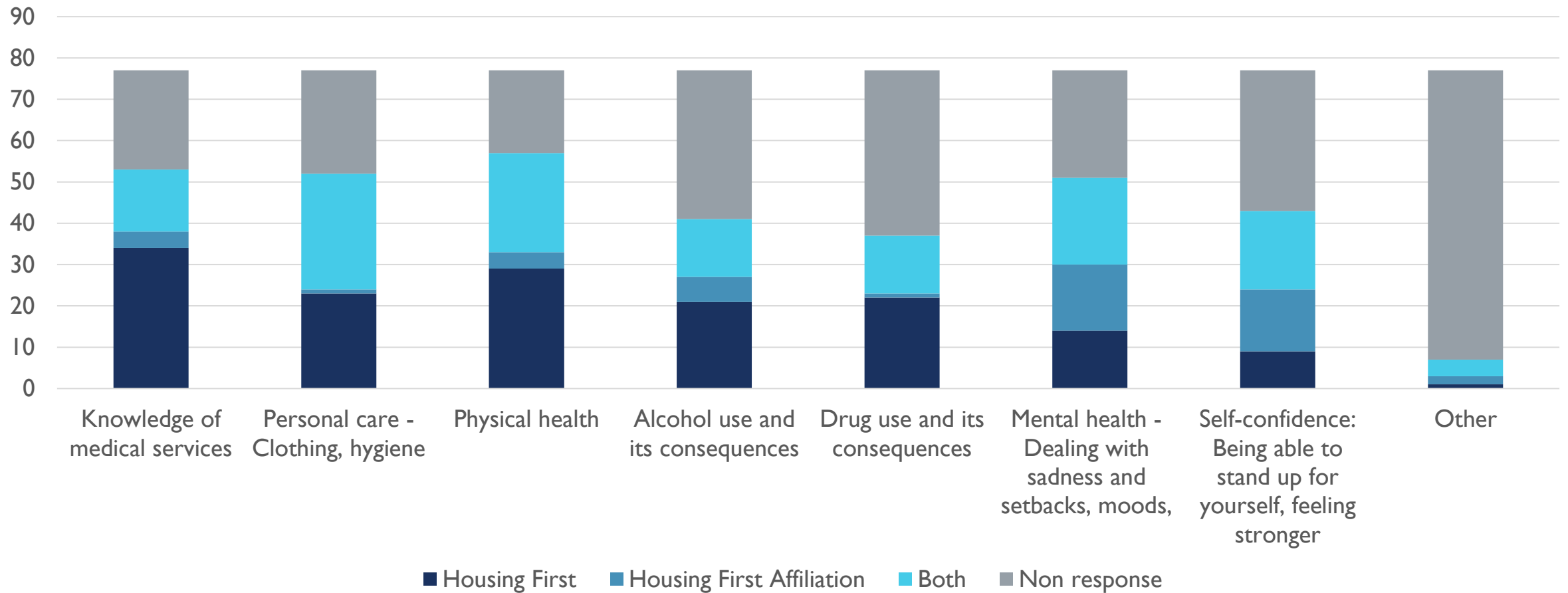
NEIGHBOURHOOD - CITY - MOBILITY



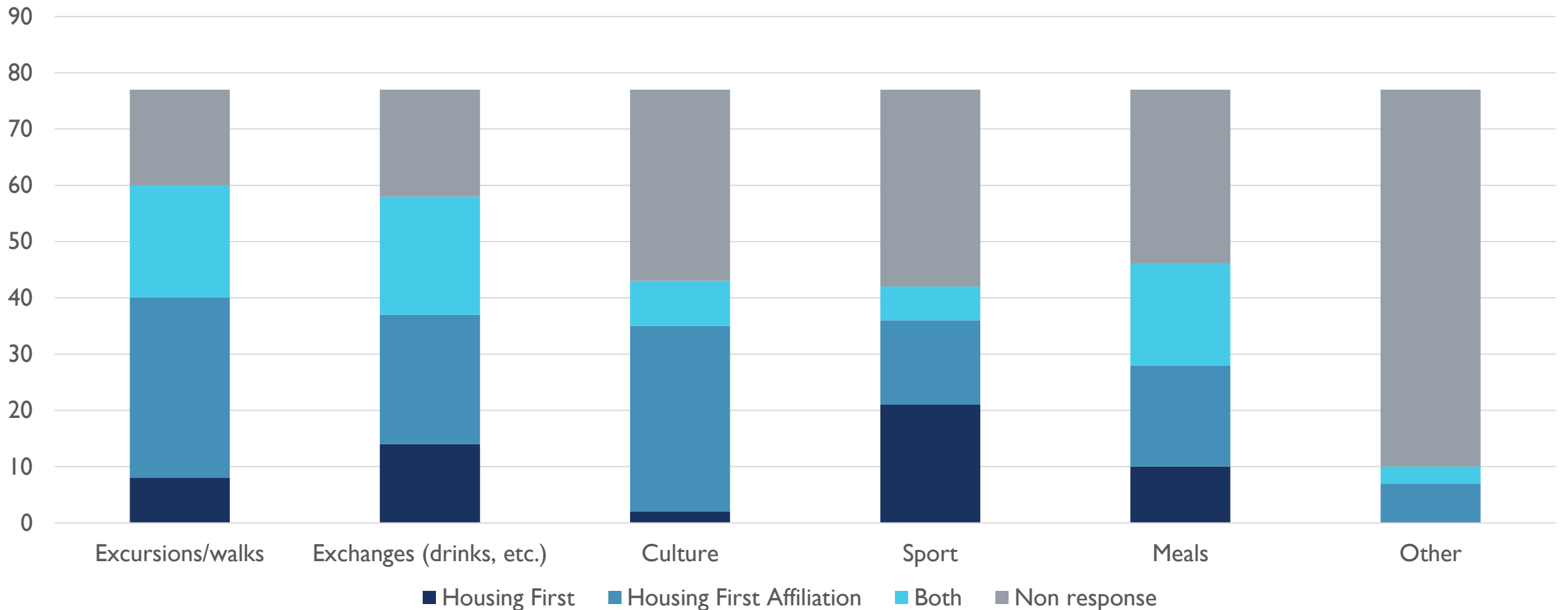
SOCIAL RELATIONS



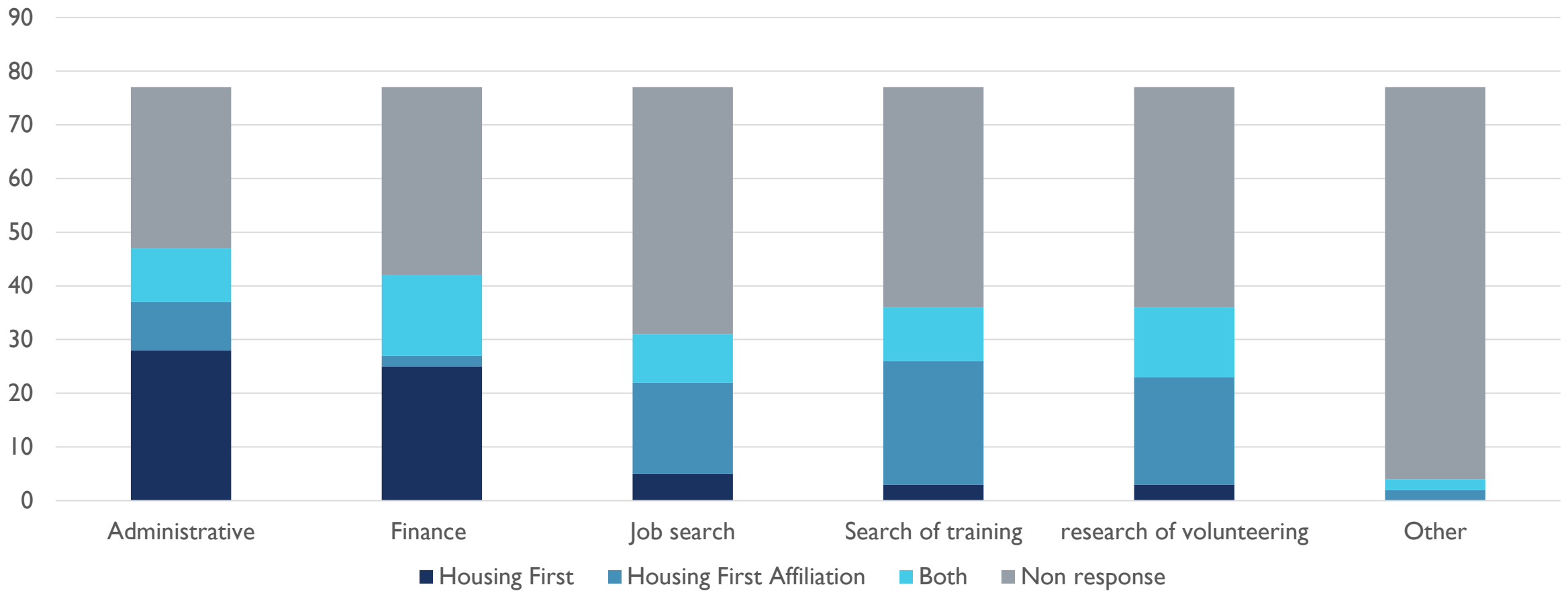
HEALTH



LEISURE / SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES



INCOME / INTEGRATION

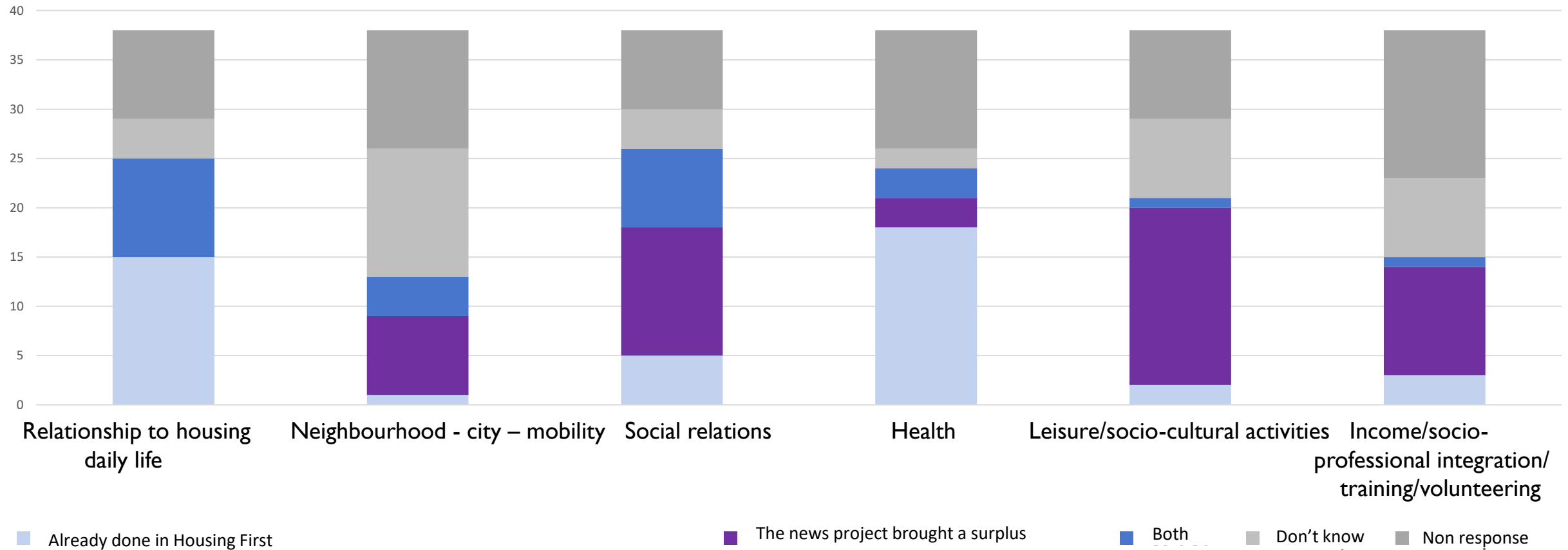




INTERVIEWS WITH HOUSED PEOPLE



ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN THE "CLASSIC" HOUSING FIRST AND REAFFILIATION PROJECT - INTERVIEWS WITH RESIDENT BENEFICIARIES



HOUSING, DAILY LIFE, NEIGHBOURHOOD, CITY AND MOBILITY



The **relationship with housing**, rather the responsibility of the traditional HF team.

The social affiliation coach works in complementarity with the HF team.

The social affiliation coach has a role to play in terms of **"material arrangements"** (P. Pichon)



Neighbourhood, city, mobility:

Still not much invested by the coaches according to the interviews...

... but in which impacts are nevertheless perceptible according to the residents.

■ Already done in Housing First

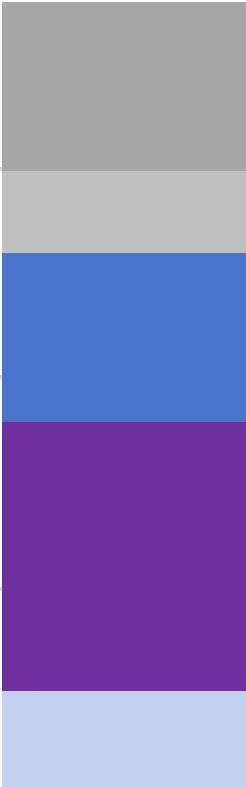
■ The news project brought a surplus

■ Both

■ Don't know

■ Non response

SOCIAL RELATION AND HEALTH

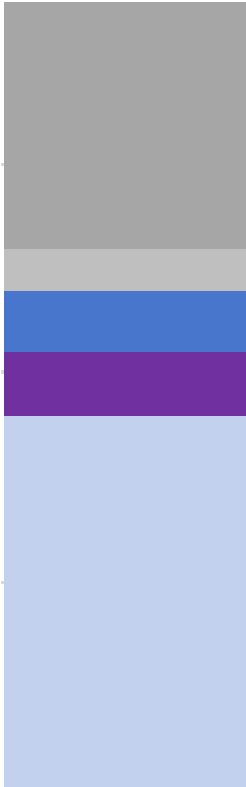


Social relations, a dimension that is transversal to all the others but little addressed as such.

This stacked bar chart represents the distribution of responses for 'Social relations'. From bottom to top, the segments are: light blue (Already done in Housing First), purple (The news project brought a surplus), blue (Both), light grey (Don't know), and dark grey (Non response).

It's all about "attachment!"

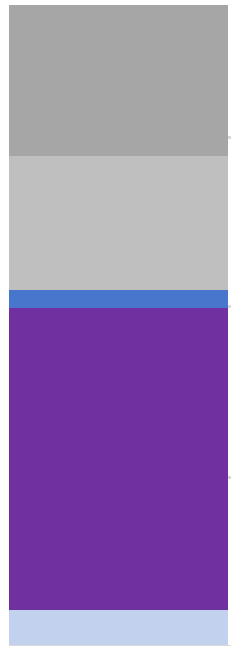
Autonomy is built from "a continuity of experience, by managing positive and negative attachments". It is therefore a question of "reinscribing people in the long temporality of their life course by ensuring that the past, present and future can once again come together without excluding each other". (E. Gardella)



La santé, un domaine essentiellement assuré par l'équipe logement mais qui relève aussi de l'affiliation sociale dans le cadre d'une vision holistique de la santé.

This stacked bar chart represents the distribution of responses for 'La santé'. From bottom to top, the segments are: light blue (Already done in Housing First), purple (The news project brought a surplus), blue (Both), light grey (Don't know), and dark grey (Non response).

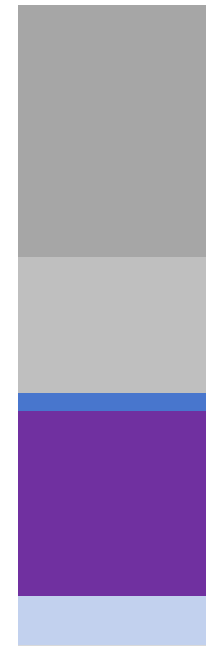
LEISURE, SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND VOLUNTEERING



Leisure and socio-cultural activities, at the heart of social affiliation.

An area that has been heavily impacted by the health crisis and distancing measures.

Creative social workers with a strong emphasis on peer learning.



Socio-professional integration, the holy grail?

Contrasting positions according to the projects,

The risk of confronting residents with institutions/organisations whose criteria are too far removed from their habits.

Intervention in these areas of life has an impact on the residents' "**anchoring**", i.e. their "social and territorial registration, which opens up the possibility of participating in the life of the city, of feeling a recognised member of it" (Maurine Morin). (Maurine Morin)

A SUPPORT MISSION WHOSE CONTOURS ARE SHAPED BY INTERACTION WITH THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Considering the 'Social Affiliation' scheme as an attempt at social innovation, we can deduce that it does not rest on the shoulders of a lone social worker but that it relies, on the contrary, on a whole network of actors.



Importance of the institutional framework on the implementation of the system and on the content of the support



Heterogeneity of institutional configurations in the different projects

A SUPPORT MISSION WITH CONTOURS SHAPED IN INTERACTION WITH THE SOCIETAL CONTEXT

- ✓ **Housing First principles that do not necessarily resonate well with social action and socio-professional integration agencies (wel-workfare dilemma)**

*"It's a **challenge to bring the HF public outside the homeless network**. I have to say I was afraid because just the fact of consumption... in HF you don't demand that people don't consume anymore, and then almost everywhere there is this rule that you can't consume. There are few places where this is not the case. [Social affiliation coach, Brussels]*

*"You have to **be flexible** and that's what's complicated with the institutions (...). Somehow, as a coach, with the very broad framework I have, I can adapt to people and offer them either mini-trainings or activities, taking into account that yes, the person might show up 30 minutes late, but at least he or she has shown up. [Social affiliation coach, Namur]*

*"There are people who have disability incomes, there are people who have mutual health insurance incomes, so I wonder about the risks... It's a fear of theirs but it's also a fear of mine, **I ask myself: what are we doing? I wonder: what are we doing? Are we pushing towards training, towards employment, at the risk that they might lose stable income, which they might have all their life?** [social affiliation coach, Charleroi]*

A SUPPORT MISSION WITH CONTOURS SHAPED IN INTERACTION WITH THE SOCIETAL CONTEXT

✓ Stereotypes of homelessness weighing on Housing First residents

*"Already when I had them on the phone [refers to a literacy association], when I explained the project, I really felt that... I had the impression that, in terms of thresholds, it would not be possible for them. I was astonished, **I told them: just because they are part of such a project, because they have a history of homelessness, doesn't mean that they are not capable...**" [Social Affiliation Coach, Namur]. [Social Affiliation Coach, Namur]*

*"There is a lot of work to be done in this respect [concerning the awareness of structures in the medico-social sector of homelessness]. The street public, drug addicts, in the imagination, in the **stigma**, it is a public that is not glamorous, that is not reliable, that has a deplorable hygiene, that is dishonest, these are the stigmas that these people carry. If there's a robbery somewhere, it might well be the one who doesn't have any money. It's stuff like that. And then, people don't necessarily welcome this public in the same way. I've seen that a lot, even in hospital. [Social affiliation coach, Liège]*

CONCLUSION

What is a successful social reaffiliation?

- "I think affiliation is linked to recovery, and **what is recovery for the person? It's up to them to define it.** There is one person, for me, who is already almost recovered in the sense that she was looking for voluntary work, she found it, she is constant in her voluntary work and what she is looking for is to do one more day a week. [Coach, Namur]
- "From the moment the person **feels less alone, feels accepted...** people with profiles like those we accompany, I don't know if they will be 100% integrated, but when a person doesn't feel looked at in the street, when people are not afraid of them, then I say to myself: it's already a huge step forward." [Coach, Charleroi]
- "Success would be **to see people surrounded and evolving alone in their social environment.** For me, once they are surrounded, even if sometimes they drop out a bit, I think that nothing beats a friendly or loving relationship or one in which people are personally involved." [Coach, Liege]« Je pense que l'affiliation c'est lié au rétablissement, et qu'est-ce que c'est le rétablissement pour la personne ? **C'est à elle de le définir.** Il y a une personne, pour moi, elle est déjà quasiment rétablie dans le sens où elle cherchait du bénévolat, elle en a trouvé, elle est constante dans son bénévolat et ce qu'elle recherche c'est faire un jour en plus par semaine. » [Coach, Namur]

CONCLUSION

- Social affiliation support: a fight against the "denial of recognition" of Housing First residents as former homeless people,
- Having a place to live is a prerequisite for leaving the "street career" but it is not enough,
- Social affiliation support would benefit from starting as soon as the person enters housing,
- Ideally, this should be done by specific social workers as part of an interdisciplinary team providing support without time limits.

All this was largely impacted by the health crisis...