

Tackling homelessness with Housing First Programs and Personalized Social Support: the HF Italy Community Experience.

Monitoring Statement Synthesis
by fio.PSD ETS, February, 12th 2025

Housing First and personalized social support represent an effective approach to addressing severe adult marginalization. The experience of the Community HF-Italy highlights the importance of permanent housing as a basis for supporting homeless people. From 2014 to 2024, the national monitoring fio.PSD has shown that providing safe housing and person-centered planning significantly improves the quality of life of beneficiaries, integrating them into society and promoting the well-being of the entire community.

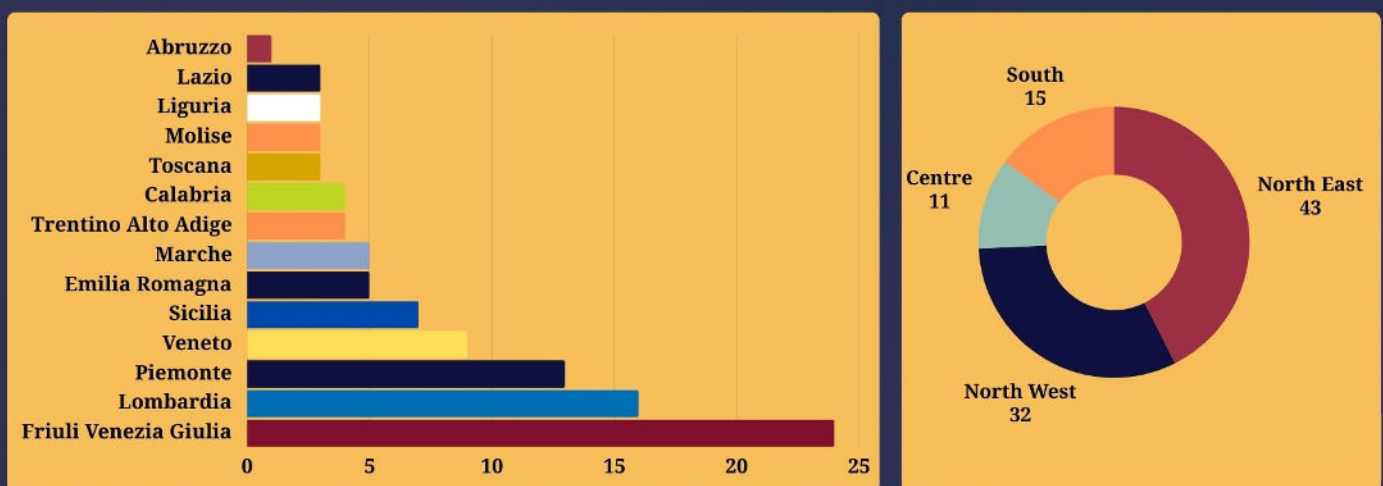


Since 2014, the Housing First (HF) approach has transformed the services in Italy, evolving from an experimental model to a fundamental pillar in the fight against homelessness. HF has revolutionized the traditional approach to assistance for the homeless, offering them stable housing and integrated support, overcoming the emergency model based on staircase approach.

What does HF mean?

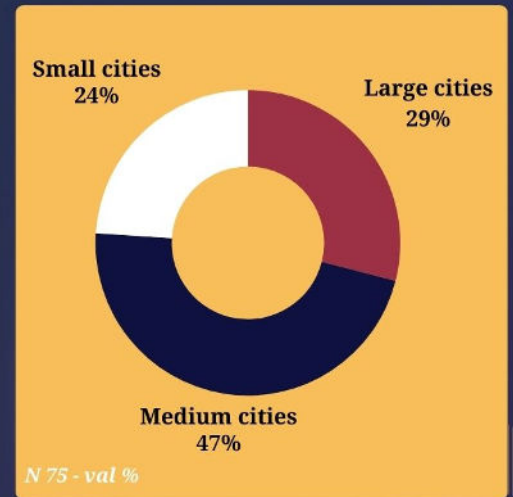
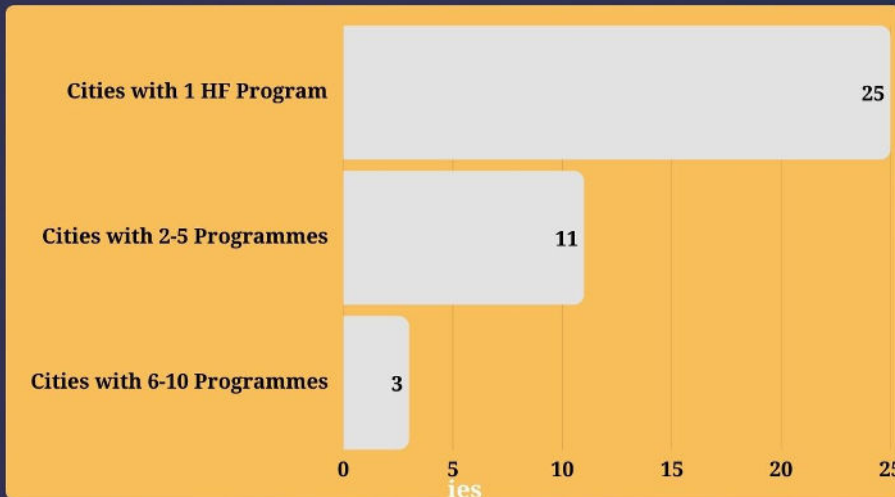
Community Housing First Italia (HFI), promoted by fio.PSD ETS (Italian Federation of Organizations for the Homeless), today represents a network of 62 member organizations, present in 14 regions and 37 Italian cities, demonstrating continuous growth and a constant commitment to the promotion and implementation of the HF model. The HFI Community is characterized by the diversity of its member organizations, including social enterprises (50%), public bodies (11%), foundations and religious bodies (16%), other ETS (15%) and voluntary organizations (8%). This diversity is essential to reach a wider range of beneficiaries and to promote social and economic integration.

The HF-Italy Community



Over the last ten years, 75 HF programs have been launched, with a strong presence in the North East (42%), North West (32%), South (15%) and Central Italy (11%). Medium-sized cities are the protagonists of HF with 47% of the programs. 1 program out of 3 is developed in the 7 metropolitan cities with 22 HF projects (29%); the remaining 24% in small cities are located in small-sized cities (24%).

HF programs in Italy from 2014 to 2024

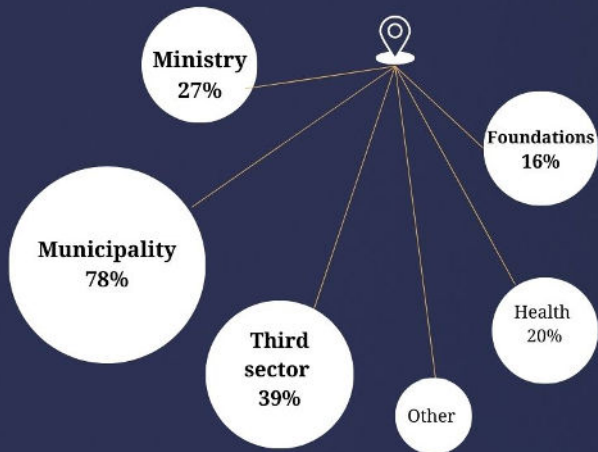


The HF programs have seen substantial involvement of various organizations: 78% have benefited from the support of the Municipalities, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (27%). In 39% of the programs the managing bodies collaborate with other third sector organizations; the Local Health Authorities have been involved in 20%, mainly as partners or consultants; 12% the Regional government and the Universities in 4%. The Foundations have played roles as financiers or partners. Other entities, such as diocesan Caritas and territorial residential housing companies, have been involved in 20% of the programs as a partner.

The progress of the HF model is also supported by significant public investments, including resources from the National Plan "Inclusion" and the Recovery and Resilience National Plan. In fact, 39% of the programs are financed by European funds and municipal funds, 31% by national funds (such as the Poverty Plan; National Fund for Social Policies). Among other sources, there are ecclesiastical funds (20% of the programs), private social funds (11%) and other forms of financing (9%). Each HF program is financed on average by 3 different sources.

This panorama of collaborations and use of multiple funds underlines the importance of an integrated support network to address social and housing challenges in Italy.

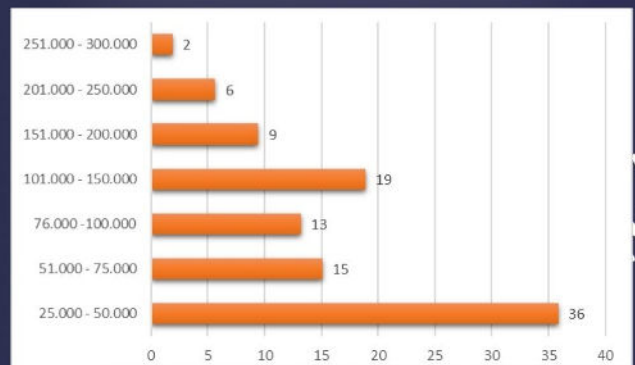
Funds and partners



On average, 3 organizations manage HF programmes



Val. % (N=53) - Multiple choices



Average annual funding used by programs for personnel, housing, and routine project management (%) (N=53)

The people welcomed in the decade were 1,763 in total, of which 65.1% were men, 34.6% were women and 0.3% were LGBTQI+ people. They are Italian citizens (61.2%), citizens from non-EU countries (33.8%) or from EU countries (5%). Average age 47. Low income, lack of work and precarious health are the prevalent problems of the people welcomed to which their respective needs for intervention are connected.

HF users

+74%

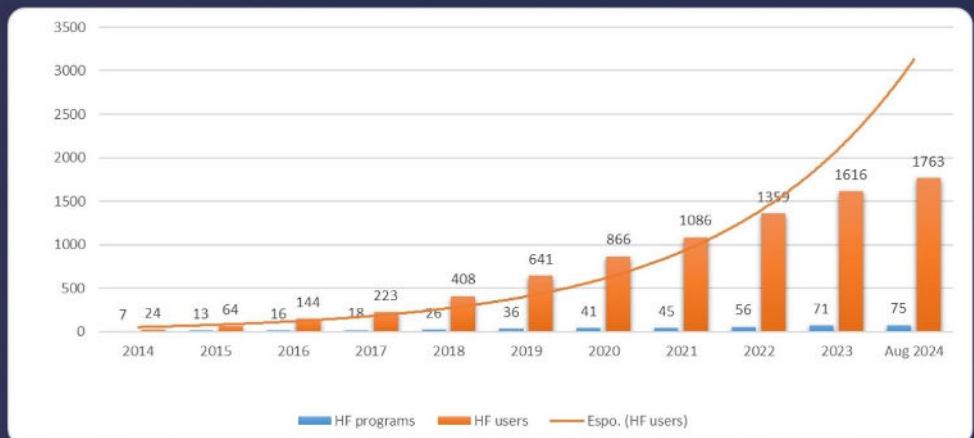
increase in programmes over the past decade

On average, 7 new HF programmes were initiated each year

+146%

increase of users over the past decade

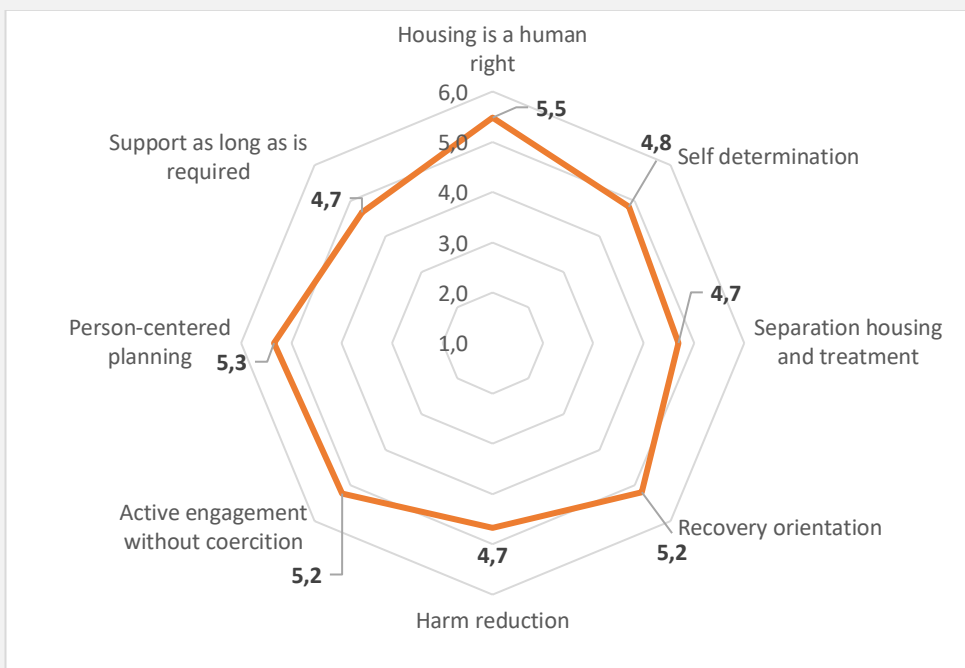
An average of 160 individuals were welcomed each year



Housing First (HF) represents an innovative approach to address homelessness among people with complex needs (these represent 69% of the target of the HF programmes analysed), focusing on immediate reception in stable accommodation and continuous social support. Although it should not replace all existing services, HF is particularly effective also for vulnerable groups such as women with experiences of abuse, young people at risk, families and migrants (43%) and people leaving penitentiary institutions or psychiatric communities (26%).

**Methodology,
target groups
and consistency
to core
principles**

The success of the HF model lies in its ability to offer a path to long-term integration and housing stability, demonstrating the effectiveness of the "home". The programmes analysed respect the eight key principles recommended by the European Guide to HF, including housing as a fundamental right and personalised design.



The HF programs analyzed show effective integration into local welfare strategies, with 69% working in a collaborative network to combat extreme marginalization. Furthermore, 45% have established collaborations with associations, productive activities and local communities, and 43% are supported by health and/or housing services, demonstrating the importance of intersectoral collaborations for the success of the program. Only 10% operate under the sole direction of the managing body.

**HF and Local
welfare system**

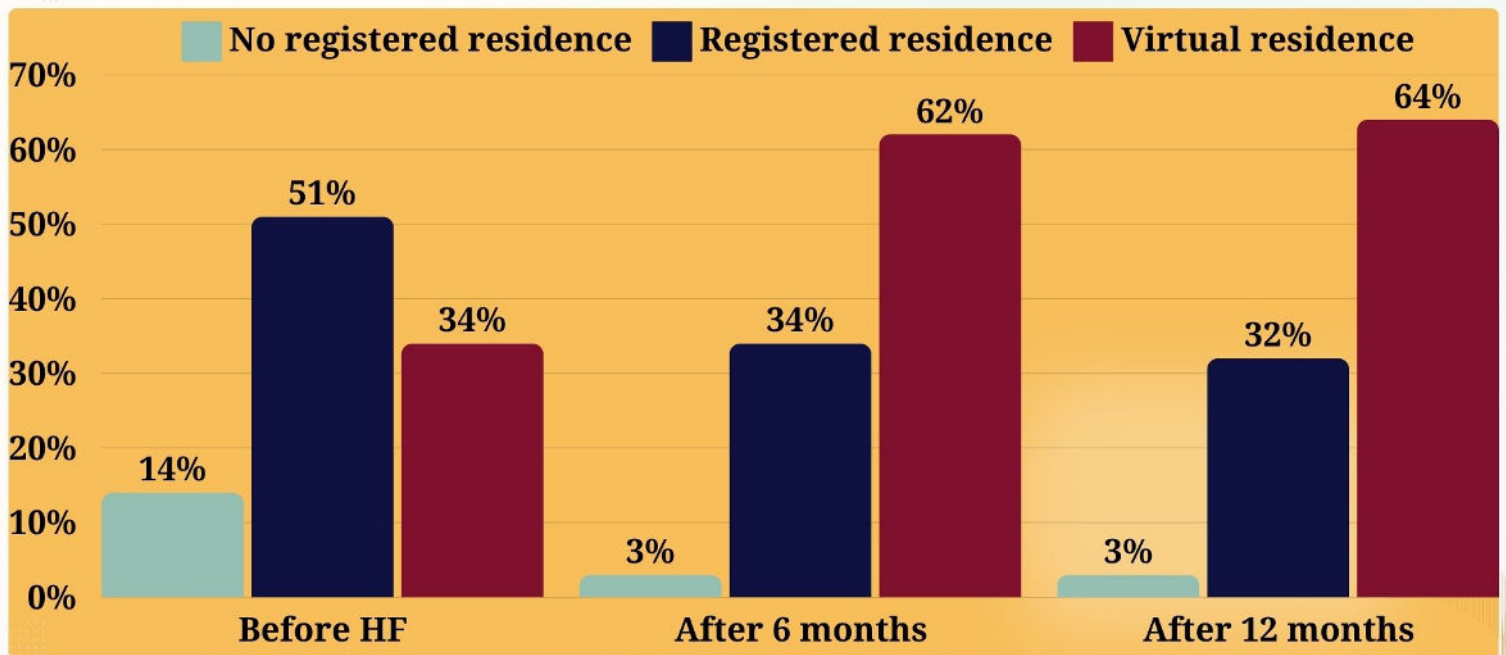
The main outcome of the HF is to end the experience of homelessness of people with complex needs and years of living on the streets through accommodation and social support.

**Outcome and
impacts**

The HF approach has been shown to be effective in improving:

- **housing stability:** The HF program highlights long-term housing stability for participants, with an average length of stay in the home of 2 years. 62% of the homes are provided permanently with no time limits other than those provided for by the rental contract, while 38% are temporary, with constraints related to projects. The number of registrations has doubled. In a sample of 90 people observed, only 34% had a residence when entering the home, but the percentage rose to 62% after 6 months and 64% after 12 months. At the same time, fictitious residences or people without residences have decreased, the latter from 14% to 3% after 12 months.

Housing stability

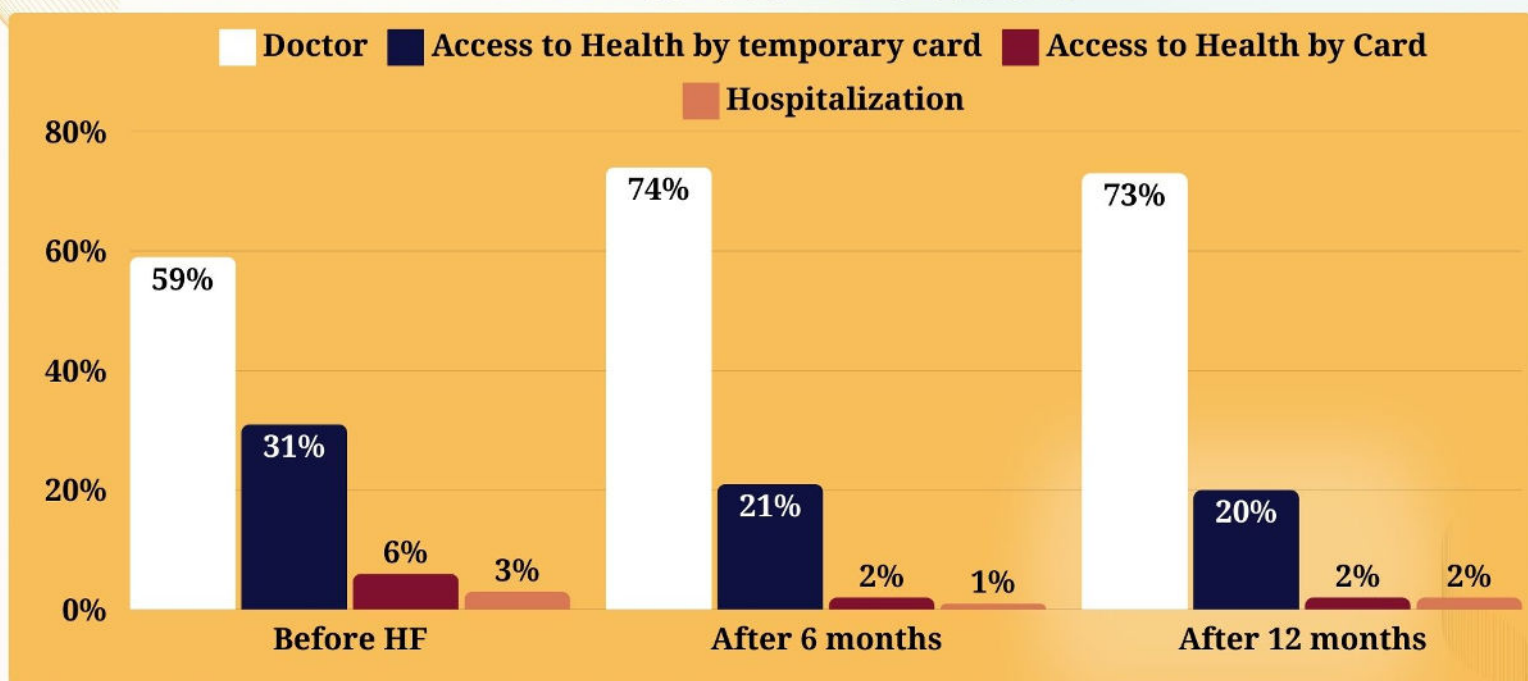


- **health and well-being:** we observed that, among 90 participants in the HF programs, there is an improvement in the use of the health system after 6 and 12 months. 25% more people obtained a Doctor. Access to the Health national system only with a temporary permit/card for abroad citizens has decreased, as have access to the Emergency without registration to National Health System, which has halved. Access for hospitalization or therapies has also partially decreased. Housing First (HF) programs have shown a significant improvement in the lives of the people welcomed, thanks to intensive and personalized support. Specialized teams carry out home visits, with 50% of the projects carrying out weekly visits, 40% with variable frequency and 10% bi-weekly. The main activities include professional care (which 91% of HF beneficiaries enjoy), i.e. an intervention certified by the professional social service which provides for the activation of social benefits, networking interventions with other resources and public and private services in the area to promote the dignity and well-being of the participants.

Health and well-being

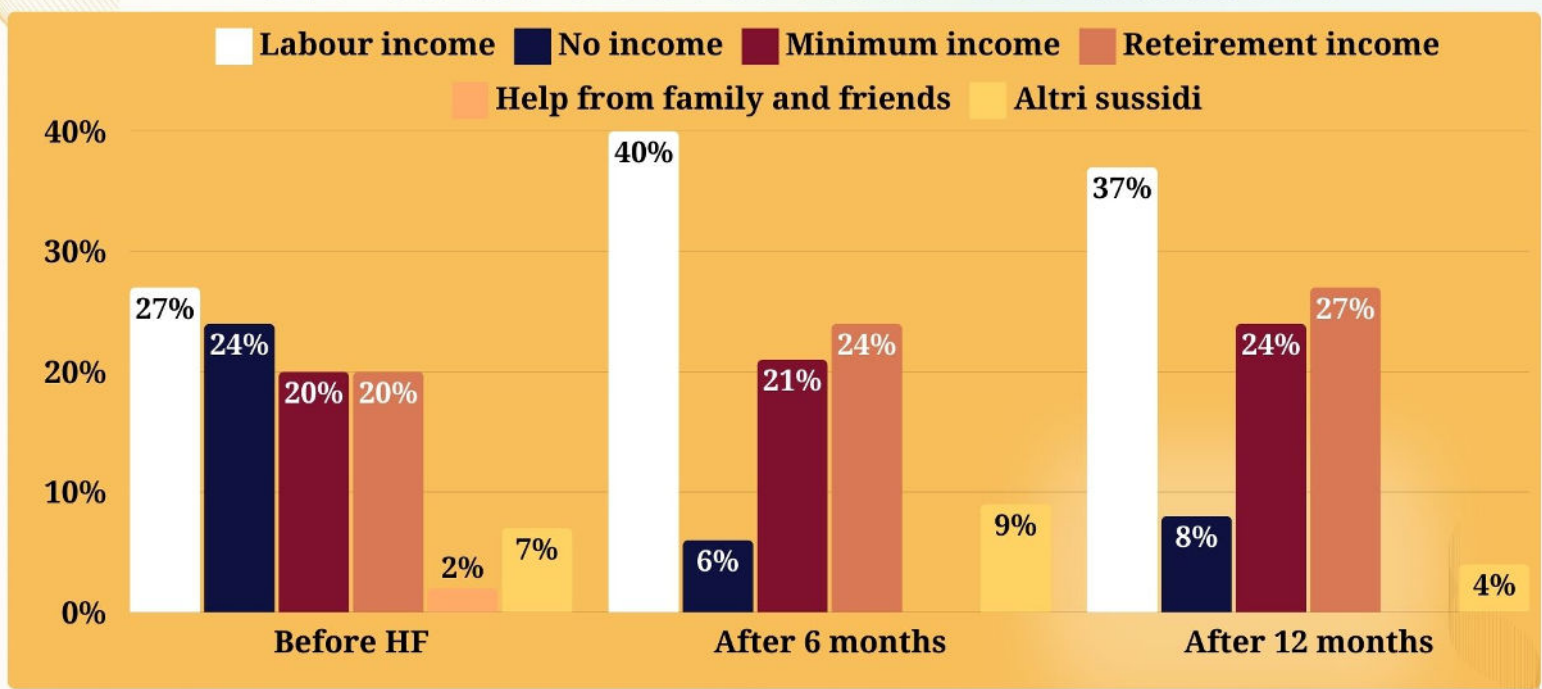
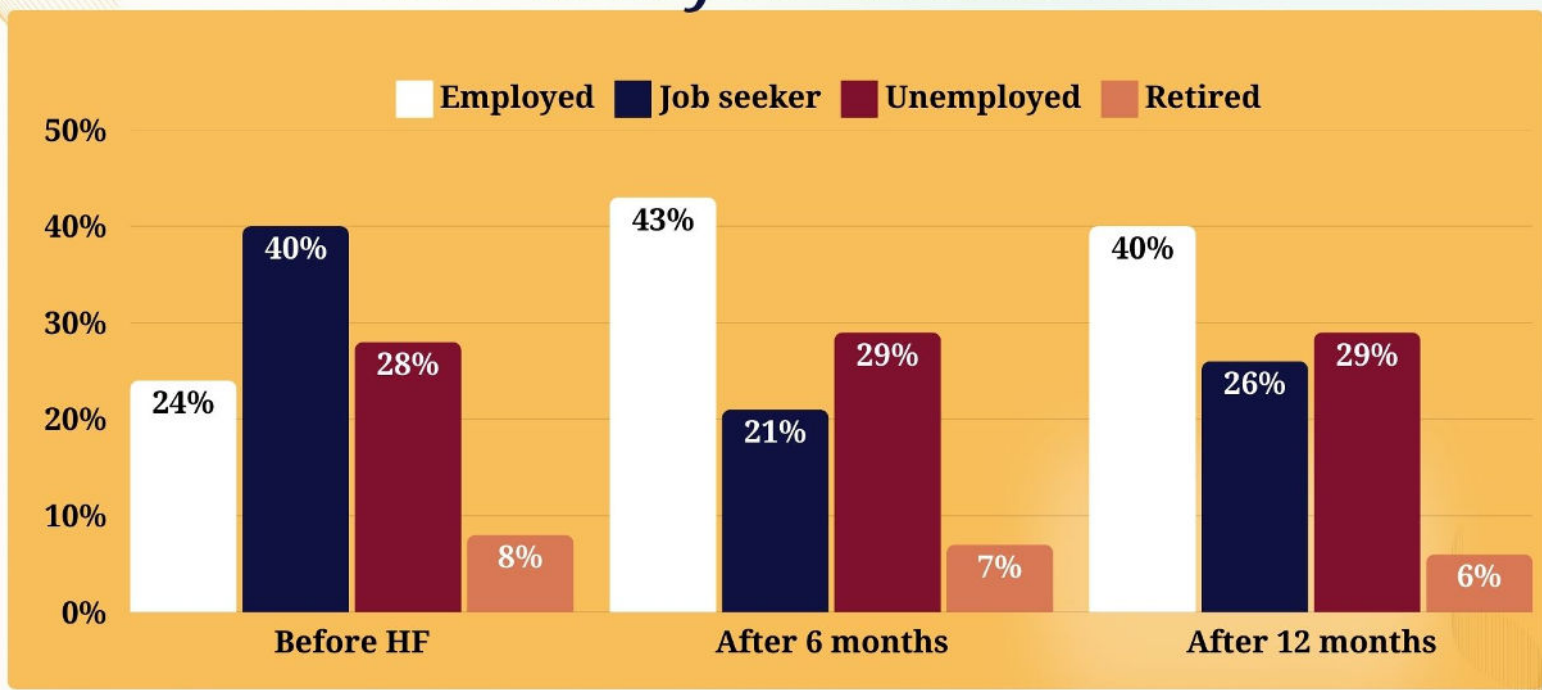
- **Social integration:** the Housing First (HF) program in Italy has demonstrated a positive impact on family relationships and social integration of participants. After one year of participation, 18% of beneficiaries improved their relationships with their partner, 27% with their children and 29% with other relatives. Furthermore, social integration has significantly improved, with a doubling of the number of people who feel very or fairly integrated into the community after 6 and 12 months from the beginning of the program as they responded positively to questions about their relationship with the neighborhood, on the use of services and public spaces, and on community social media. These results highlight the effectiveness of HF in promoting stronger social and family relationships and greater involvement in the community.

Social integration



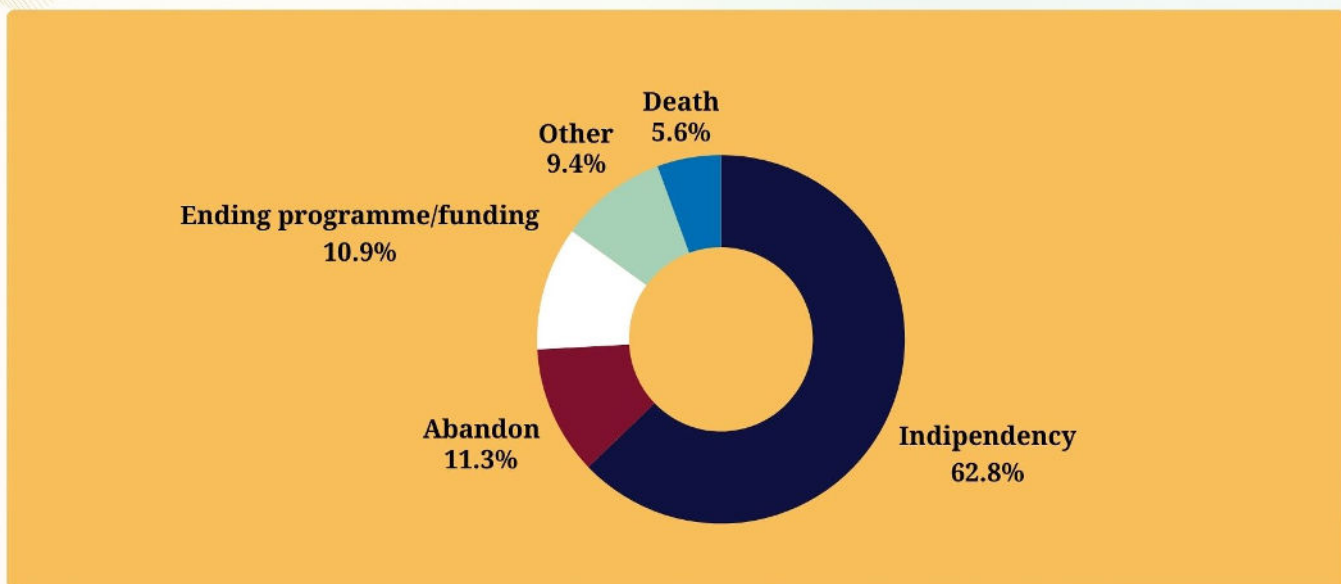
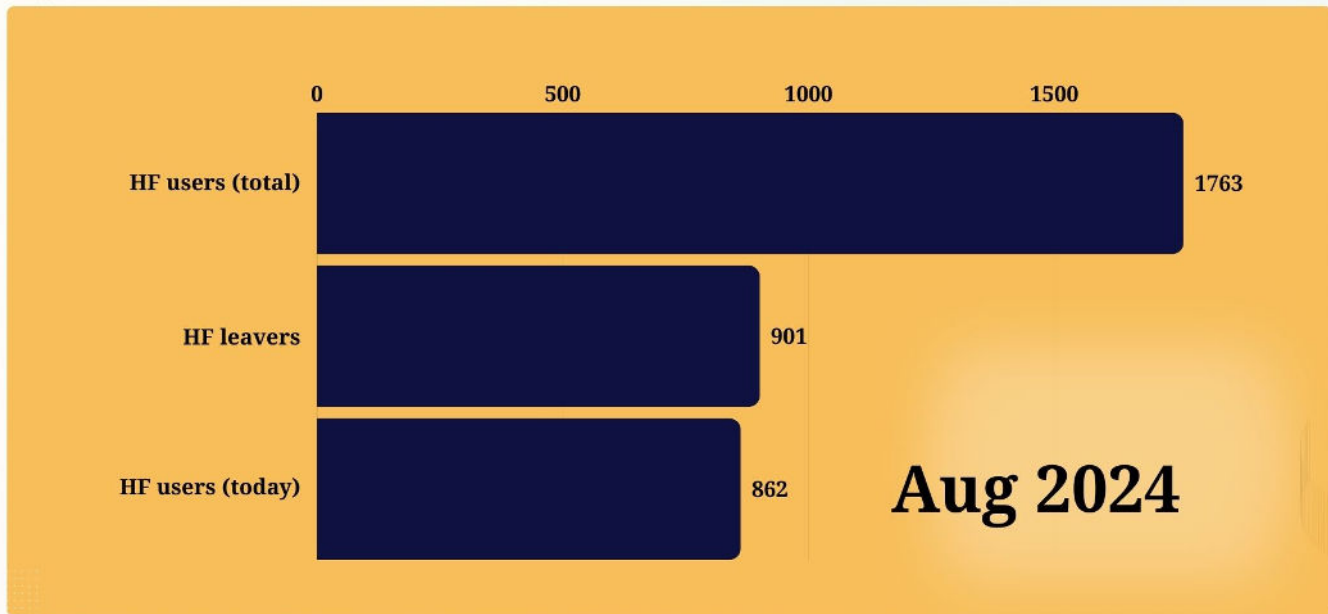
- **economic and labor integration:** The Housing First program has demonstrated significant successes in improving the living conditions of homeless people. In particular, it has had a significant impact on income, work and health. After six months of entering the program, the employment rate among participants increased from 24% to 43%, stabilizing at 40% after a year, highlighting the role of housing in facilitating access to work, even if temporary or seasonal. In terms of income, the number of people without any income dropped dramatically from 24% to 6% in six months. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the program in facilitating access to sources of income, both from work and from state support such as the Inclusion Allowance. These results underline the importance of providing stable housing to address the different dimensions of poverty.

Labour and economic integration



Over the past ten years, 901 people (51% of the total welcomed) have concluded the HF programs. Of these, 63% have achieved economic, work and/or housing independence. 11% have respectively left voluntarily or have been transferred due to the end of funding, finding refuge in other facilities. 6% have died and 9% have left for other reasons, such as eviction or family reunification.

As of August 31, 2024, 862 people are still welcomed: 85% receive support from the project, 6% live independently in HF homes



The role of the HF Teams, social support, the methodological rigor of the approach, collaboration between public and private bodies, stable housing and community work are the main ingredients for an effective HF program.

With respect to a broader picture that looks at the development of HF in Italy, it is important to point out that the data provided by this

report only concern the HF programs carried out by the bodies adhering to the HFI Community.

In recent years, HF has developed more widely in much of Italy both thanks to a cultural movement that has introduced the innovative scope of the model in combating serious adult marginalization, and thanks to a series of funding and indications from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies in support of HF programs, already included in the Guidelines for combating serious marginalization.

Currently, the Mission: 5 Component: 2 Investment: 1.3 – Temporary housing and post stations, estimates to activate, by 2026, 265 Housing first programs in the metropolitan areas and in the social territorial areas involved, providing for each the financing of 2-4 apartments and the involvement of approximately 10-15 people for a total of 3,000 people to be welcomed and a three-year financing of 177 million 500 thousand euros (DD-450-del-09122021-PNRR). Similarly, other resources will contribute to the strengthening of the HF within the component of the Poverty Fund intended to combat extreme poverty (5 million per year have been allocated by the government to Housing first for the three-year period 2021-2023); as well as the interventions to combat serious adult marginalization and the condition of the homeless and temporary housing interventions for emergency situations provided for by the National Plan "Inclusion" (2021-2027) which allocates 830 million euros.

Challenges and Perspectives

In summary, Housing First has marked a decade of success in Italy, offering a sustainable and humane model to address homelessness and promote social inclusion.

The HFI Community effort continues to be an example of innovation and collaboration in the social services sector.