

PREVALENCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRONIC PAIN IN PATIENTS ATTENDING PRIMARY CARE UNITS IN CONTINENTAL PORTUGAL: AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

AUTHORS

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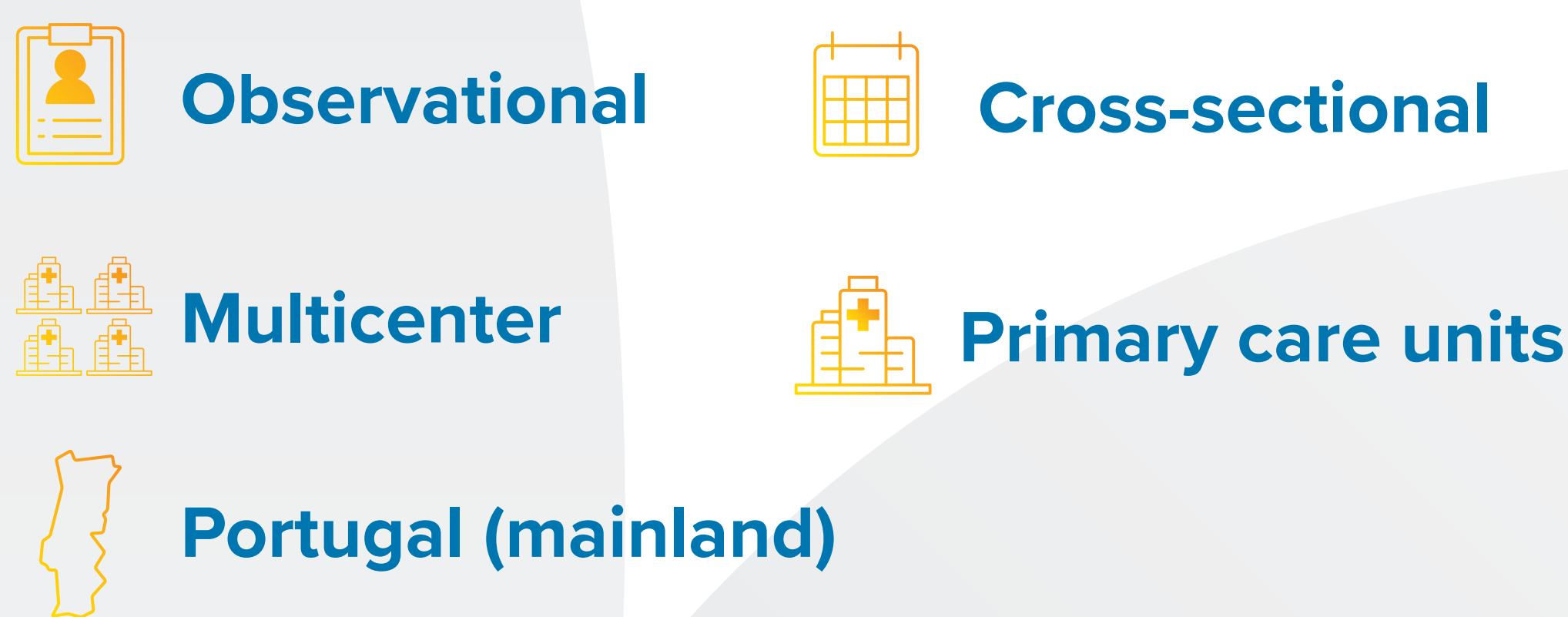
BACKGROUND

Chronic pain is a major global health issue which severely affects the quality of life of the patient and has a high economic burden on society. The prevalence of chronic pain varies among published studies depending on the definition of chronic pain and the study setting. In a study of 15 European countries and Israel, the prevalence of chronic pain ranged from 12% to 30%.¹ In the general Portuguese population the prevalence of chronic pain has been estimated to be 36.7% in a study published in 2012.² However, there is no available information regarding the prevalence of chronic pain in primary care units in Portugal, nor regarding the characterisation of these patients and their pain.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence and the characteristics of chronic pain among patients attending primary care units in mainland Portugal.

METHODS - Study design



Study population

- Adult patients (≥18 years-old).
- Patients with chronic pain defined as:
 - pain ≥ 3 months, regardless of the cause, OR
 - pain ≤ 3 months, despite the problem that originated the pain
 - being resolved (the pain persists past the original cause), OR
 - previous diagnosis of chronic pain but currently asymptomatic due to adequate treatment.³

Data collected from medical records and by interviewing the patients

- Socio demographics
- Pain duration
- Time to diagnosis
- Physician diagnosing the pain
- Pain intensity (0-10 scale)
- Pain location

RESULTS

Patient disposition flowchart

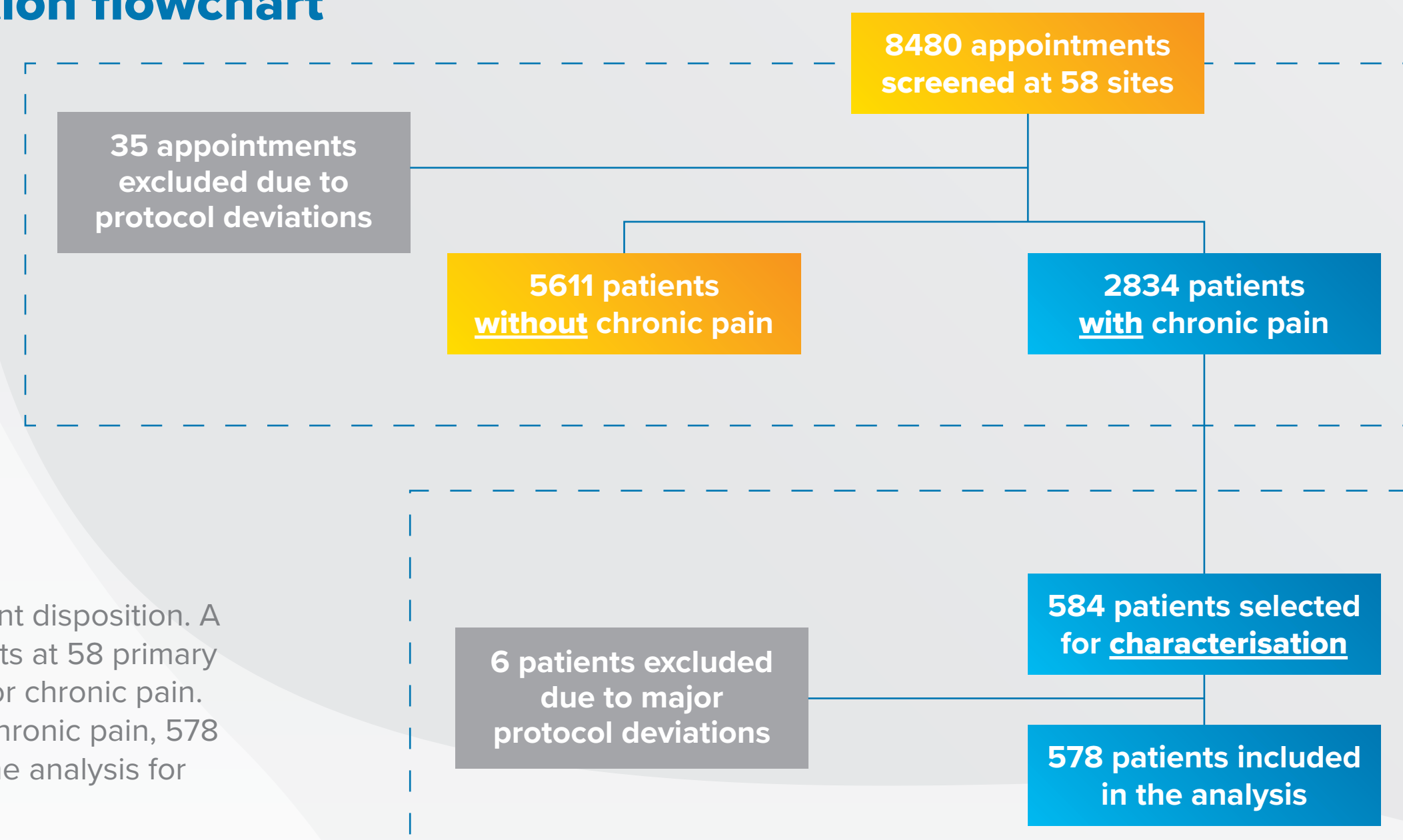


Figure 1. Flowchart of patient disposition. A total of 8445 eligible patients at 58 primary care units were screened for chronic pain. Of the 2834 patients with chronic pain, 578 patients were included in the analysis for further characterisation.

Chronic pain prevalence
33.6%
 of the patients had chronic pain

Figure 2. Prevalence of chronic pain, 2834 patients had chronic pain, N=8445.

Age distribution

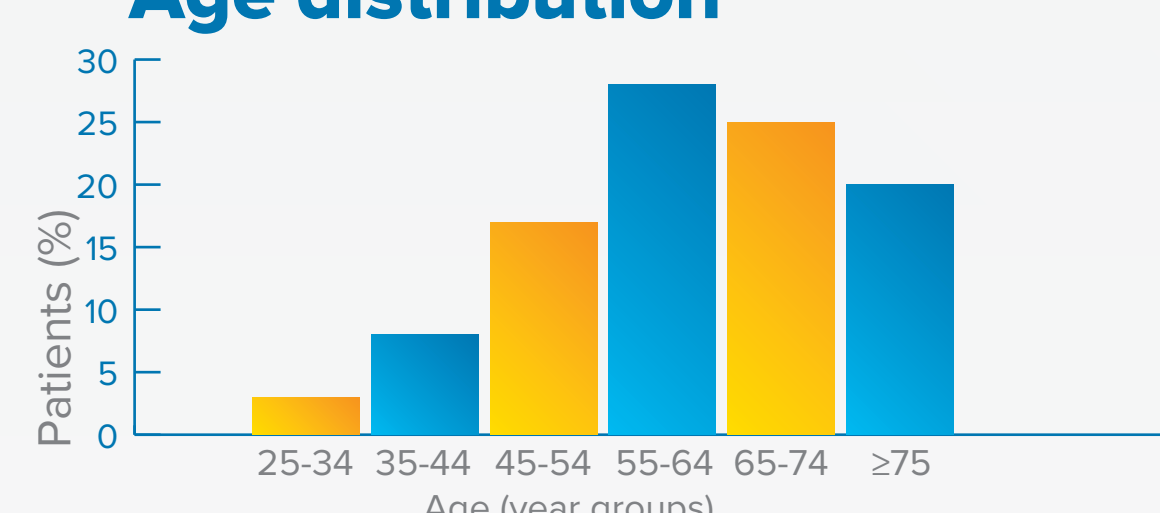


Figure 3. Age distribution among the study population, n=578.

Patient's occupational status

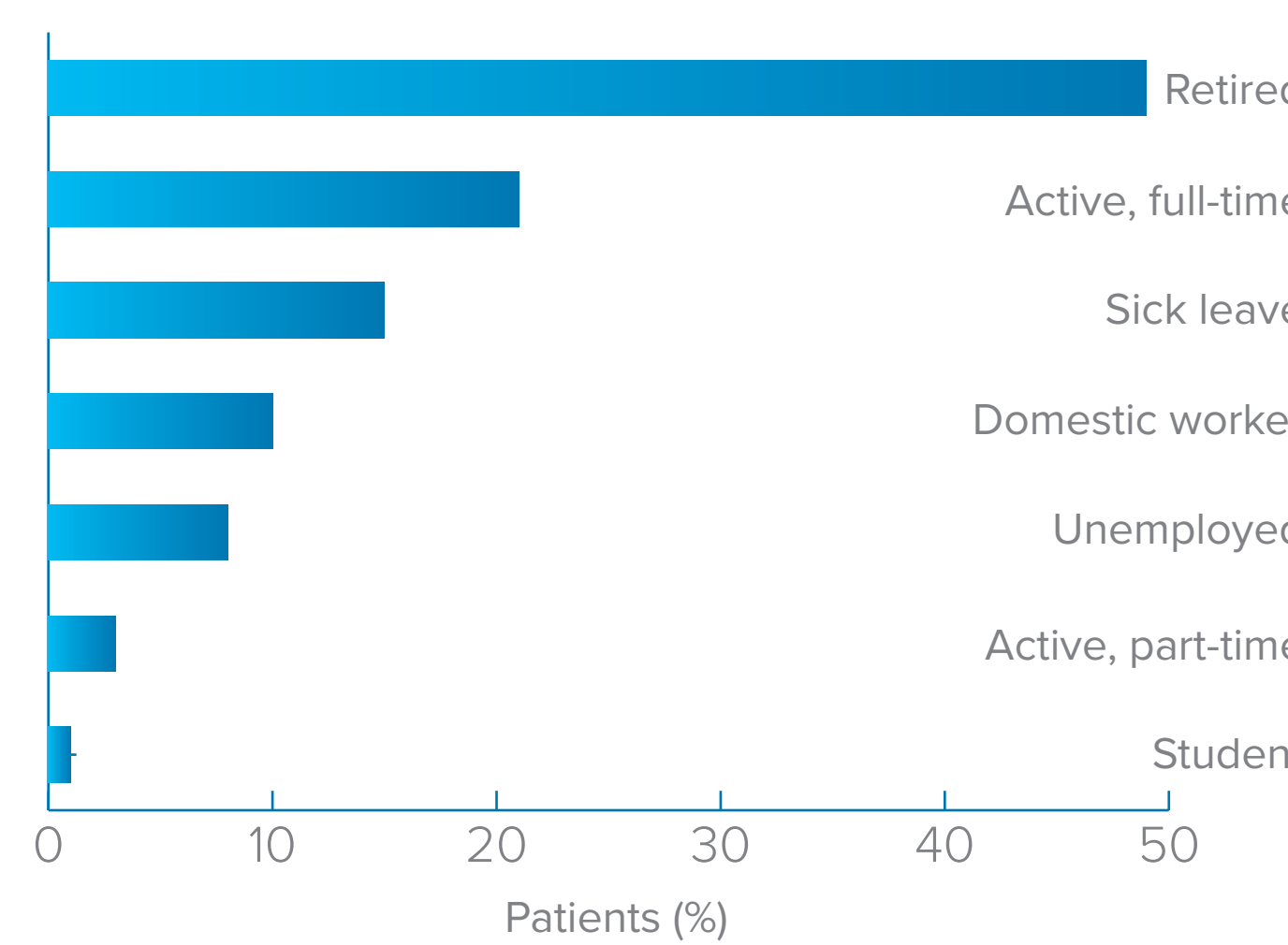


Figure 4. Occupational status among the patients in the study population.

Physician diagnosing the chronic pain

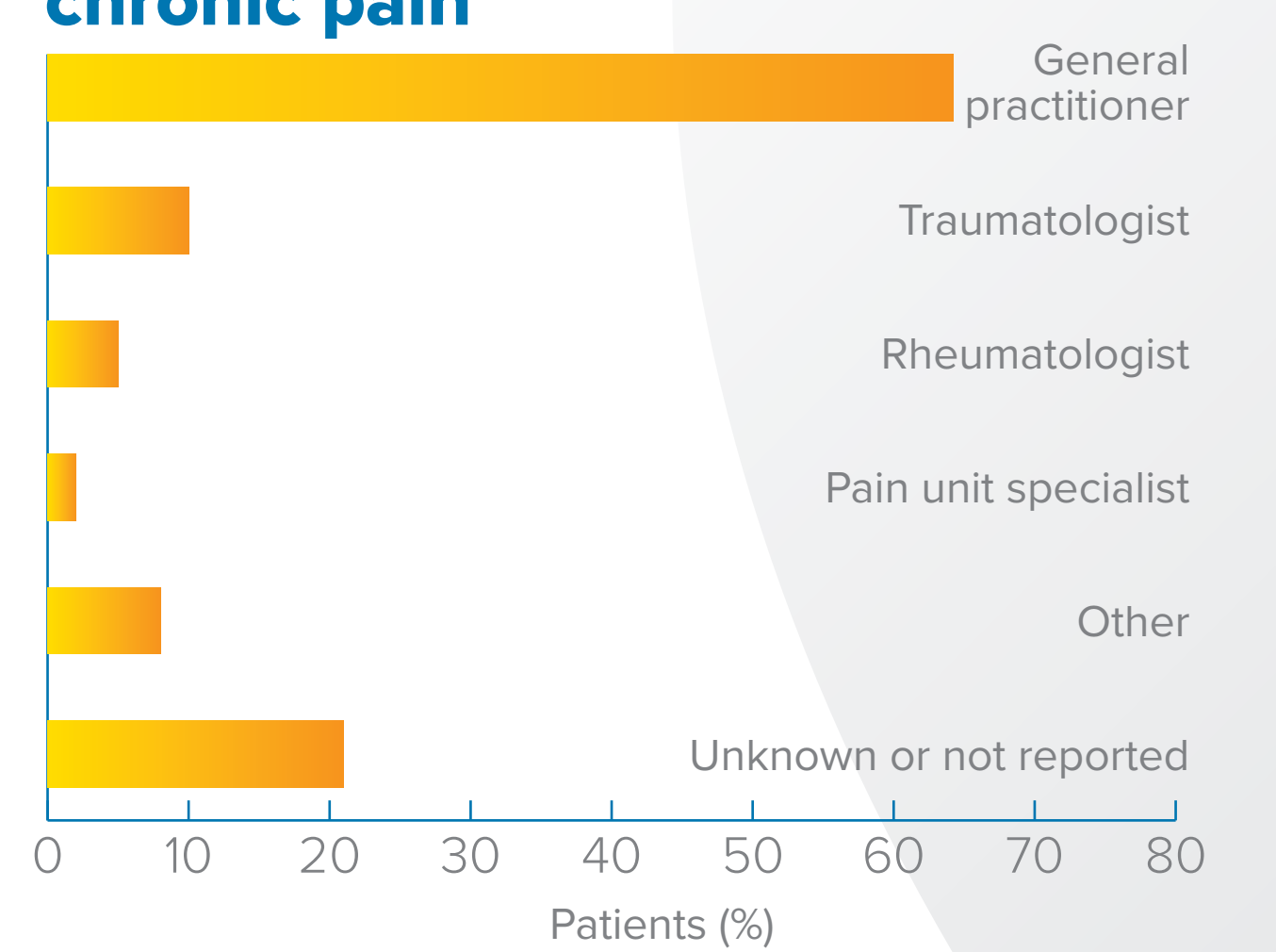


Figure 5. Physician diagnosing the chronic pain.

Pain duration

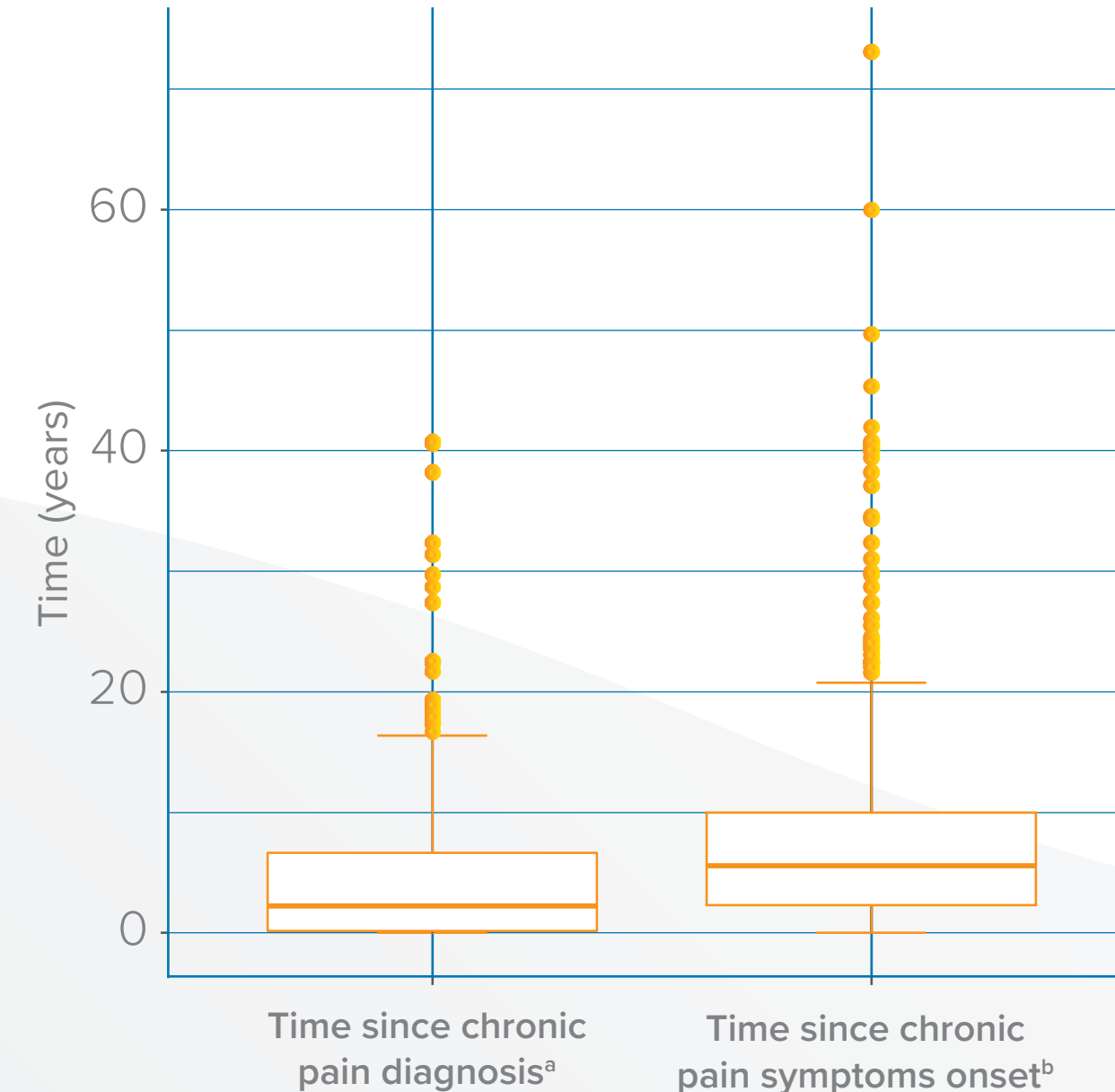


Figure 6. Elapsed time since chronic pain diagnosis and chronic pain symptoms onset. The graph shows the median value (Q1-Q3) and smallest and largest value (at the most 1.5 x interquartile range [IQR] from the hinge) ^a n=539, ^b n=455.

Elapsed time from symptoms to diagnosis

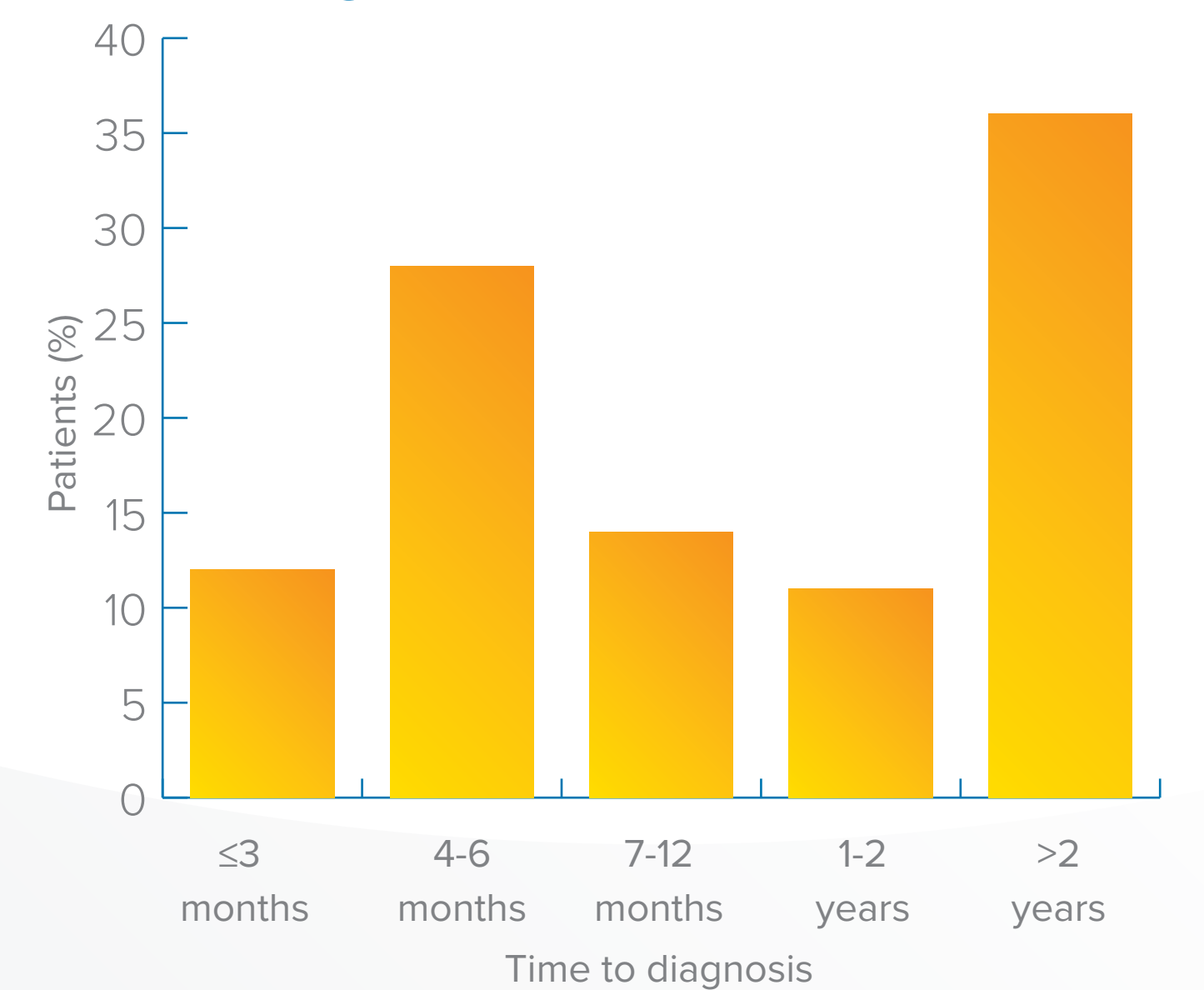


Figure 7. Time from chronic pain symptoms to chronic pain diagnosis, n = 414.

Pain intensity

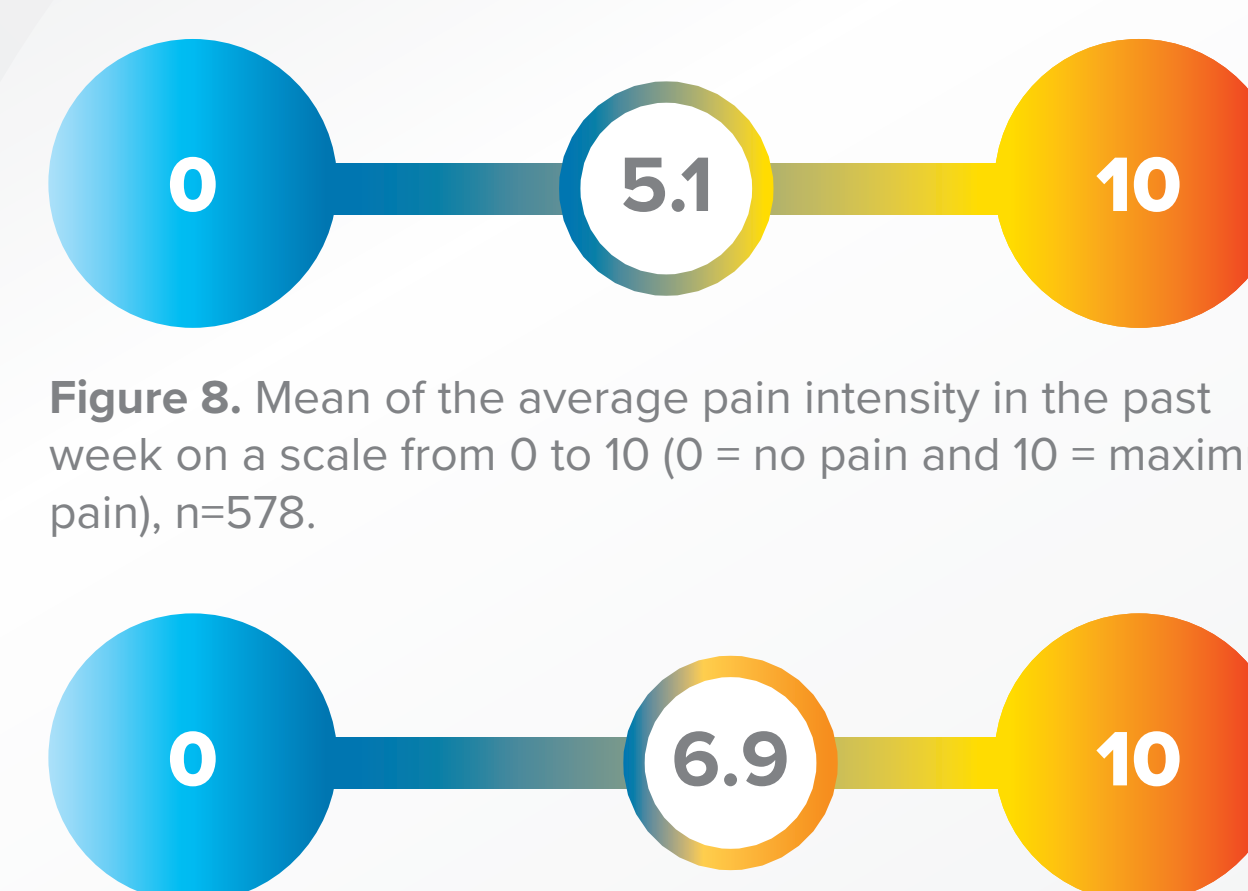


Figure 8. Mean of the average pain intensity in the past week on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 = no pain and 10 = maximum pain), n=578.

Pain location

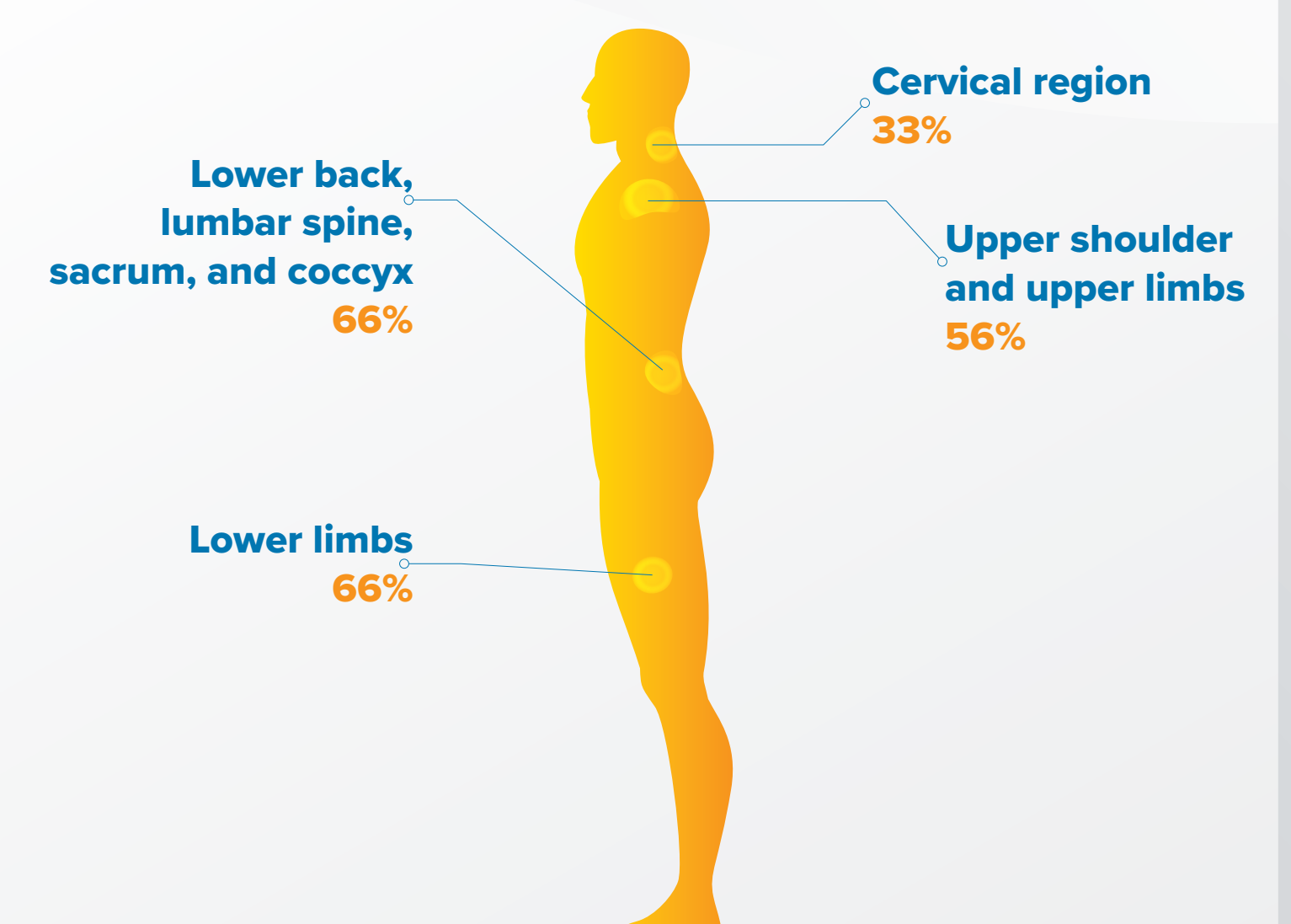


Figure 10. Main chronic pain locations reported by the study population.

CONCLUSIONS

- Chronic pain is highly prevalent. Approximately one-third of the patients included in his study had chronic pain.
- Most patients have had chronic pain for several years and had a high chronic pain severity.
- The most common sites for chronic pain were lower back and lower limbs.

References

¹Breivik, H., et al. 2006. Eur J Pain, 10, 287-333. ²Azevedo, L. F., et al. 2012. J Pain, 13, 773-83. ³Direção-Geral da Saúde. 2003. Circular Normativa 09/DGCG. A dor como 5º sinal vital. Registo sistemático da intensidade da dor. 14 June 2003, Lisbon, Portugal.

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