

Disclaimer

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Centre de Physique des Particules
de Marseille

Wellbeing - a forgotten ingredient in academic success

Lab Seminar

Ewa Pluciennicka, PhD

Thank you

A word about me...



- **Psychologist**
- **PhD in Cognitive Psychology, University of Lille, France**
- **Post-Doc in Human Neuroscience, Strasbourg, FR, Birmingham, UK**
- **Founder of PhD Success**

**Stop struggling.
Start enjoying your PhD!**

Hey!
We have a special gift for you!

The PhD Success Guide

10 secrets to succeed
and enjoy your PhD

PhDSuccess.eu

Plan

- Mental health crises in academia
- Warning signs
- Solutions
- Q & A

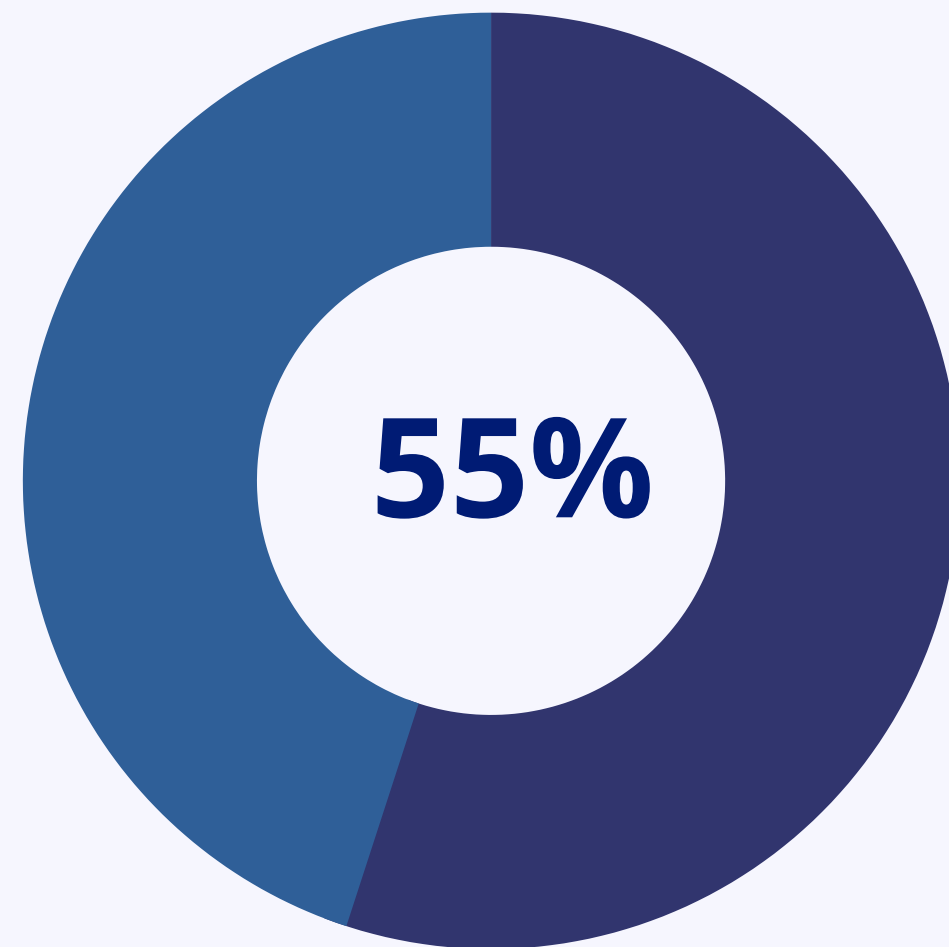


PhD Students/Candidates Early Career Researchers (ECR)

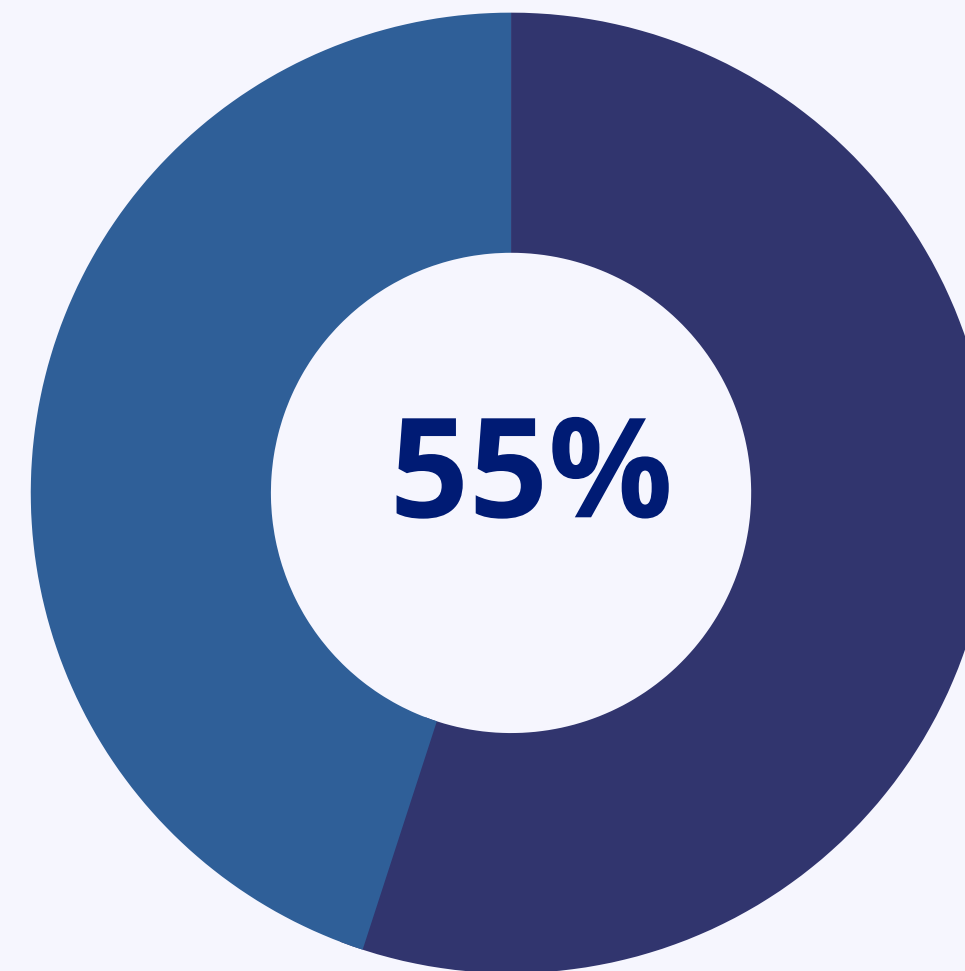
Homogeneous group
Existing studies

Mental Health in Academia

- **Nature Survey, 2017**
- 5700 PhD Candidates worldwide



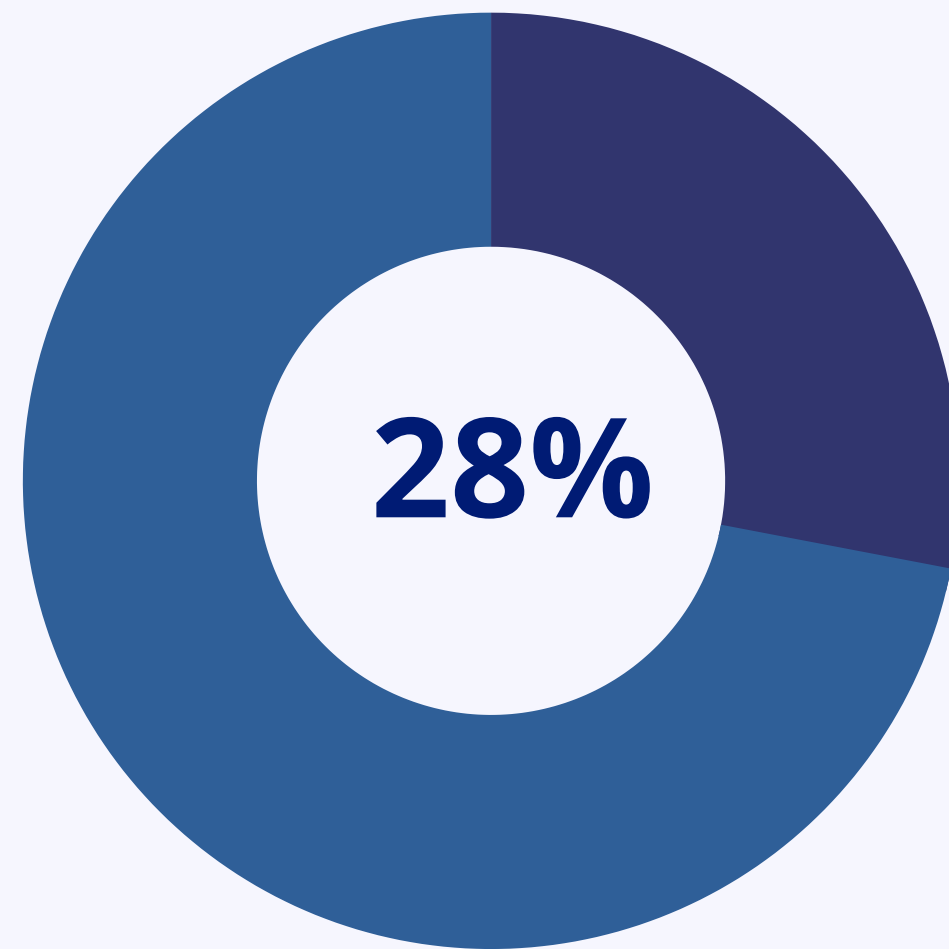
Career Path



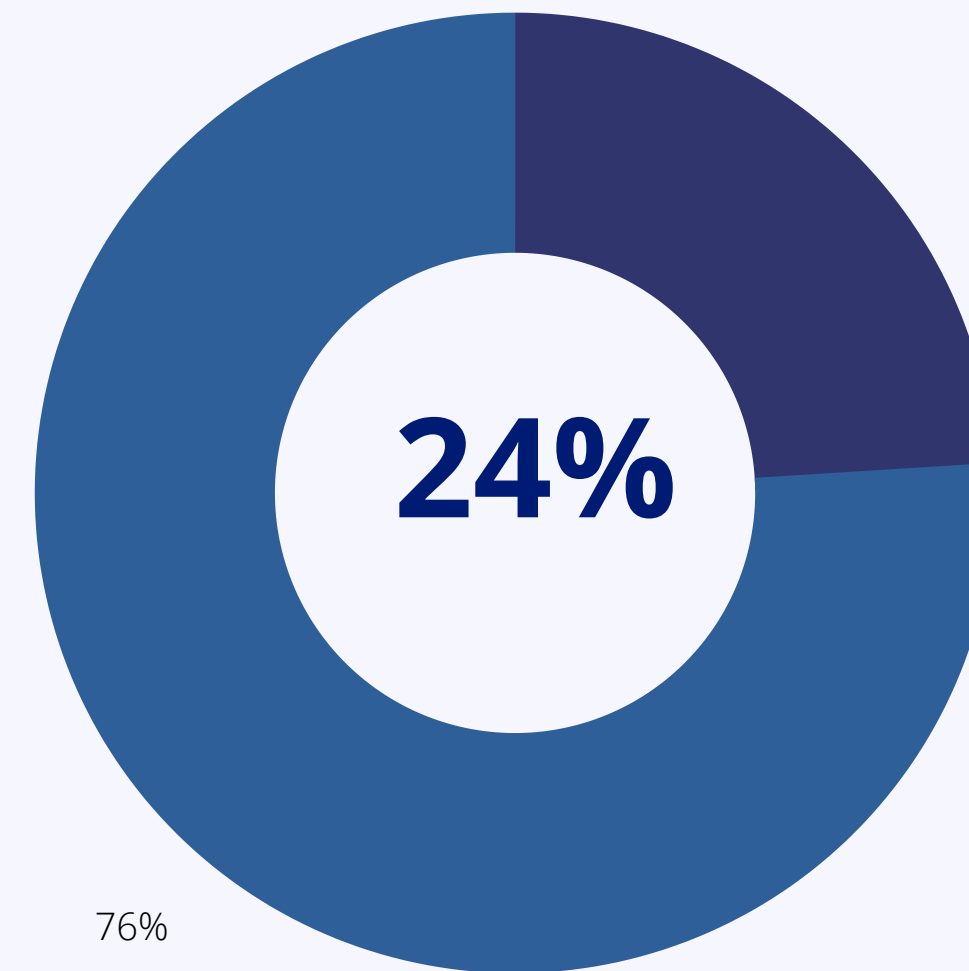
**Work-life
balance**

Mental Health in Academia

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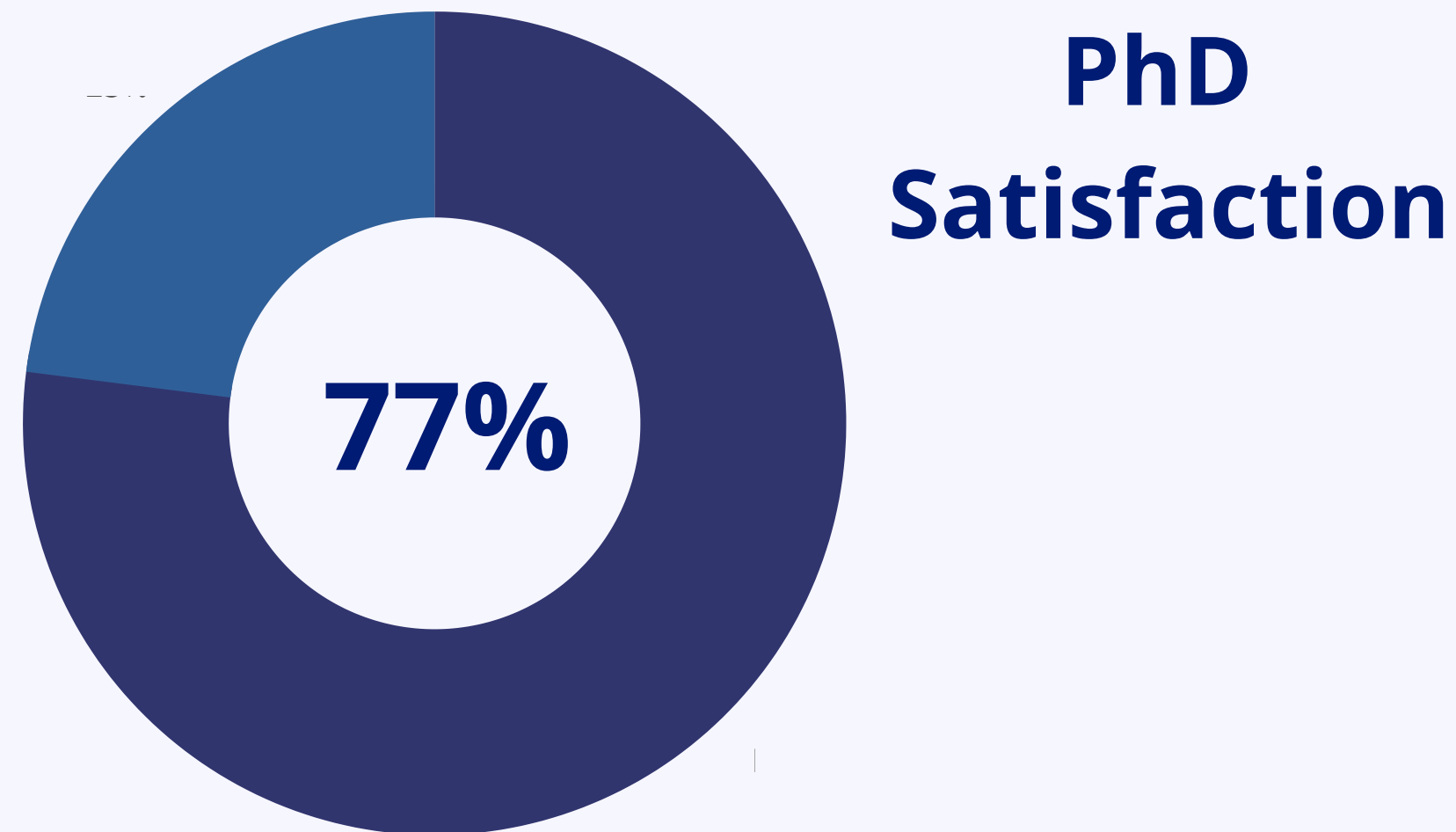
**Mental
Health**



**Imposter
Syndrome**

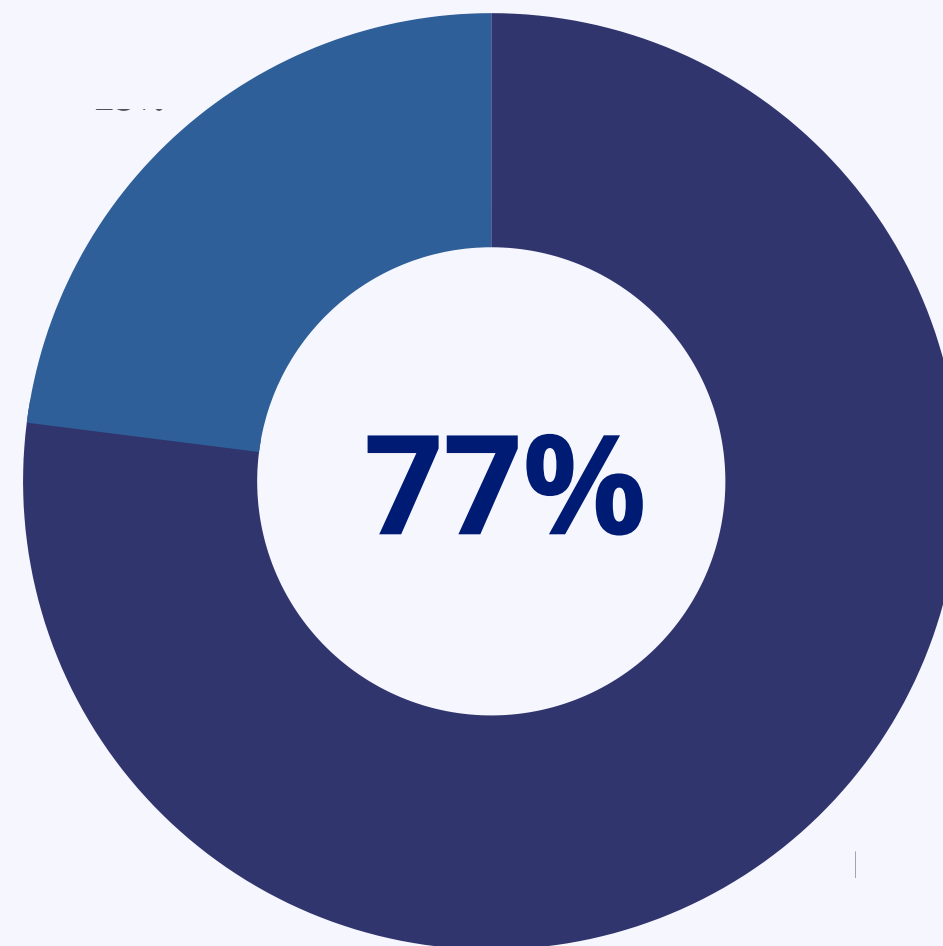
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PhD Satisfaction

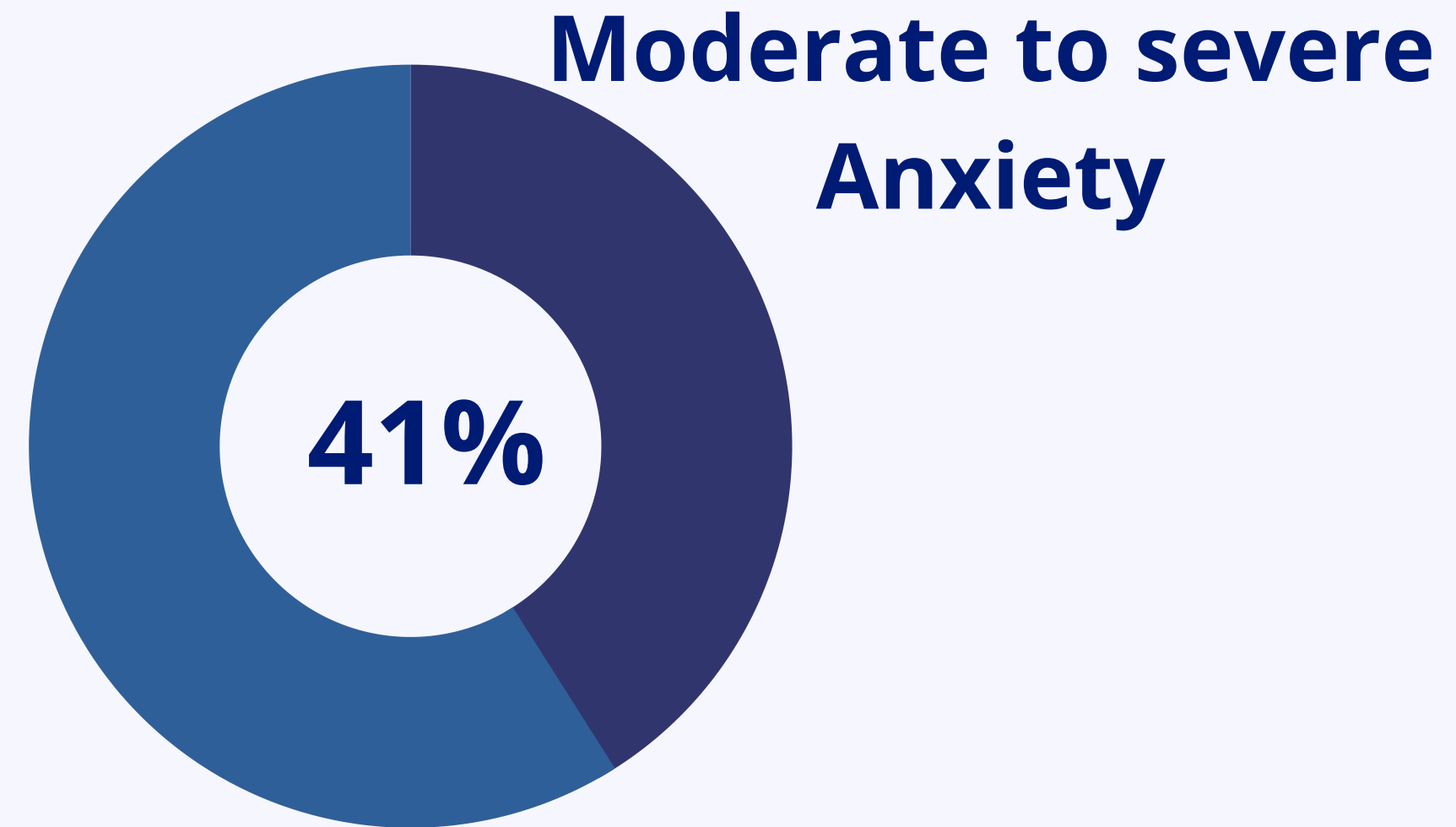
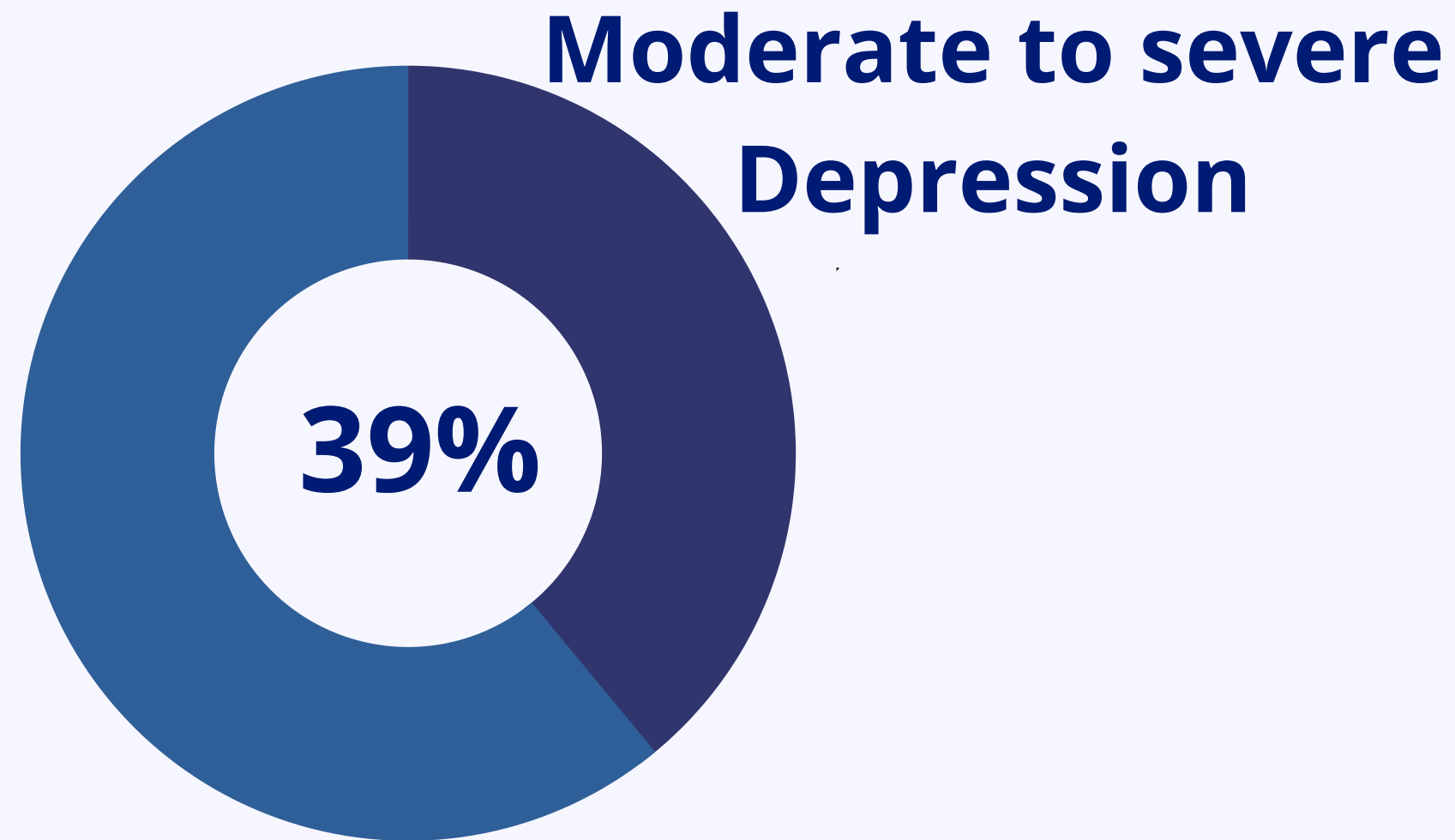
- Intellectual challenge
- Learning opportunities
- Interesting topic
- Independence
- Meaningful work

Warning 1:

We love what we do, so we are ready to
suffer from it and **to make sacrifices**

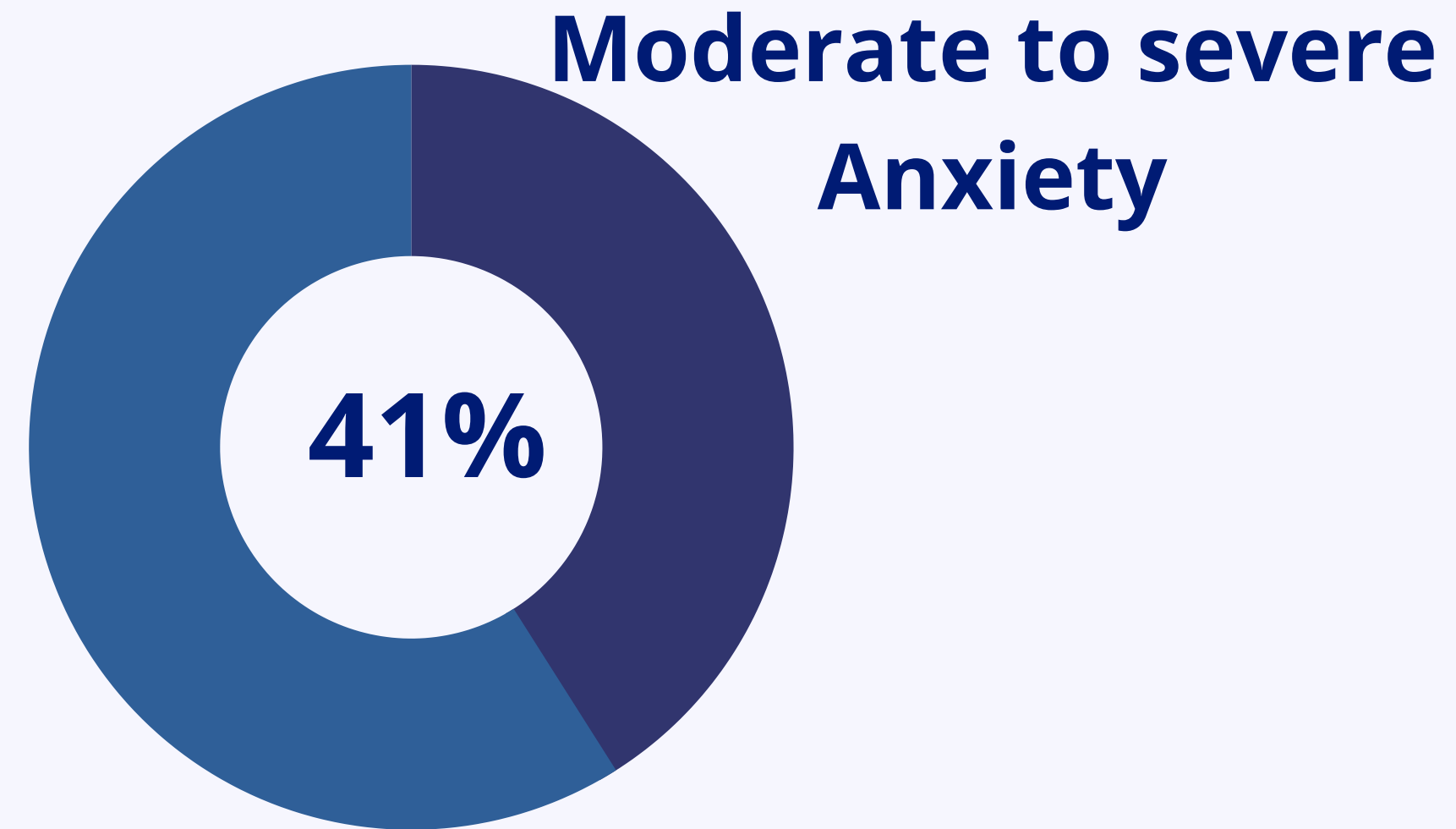
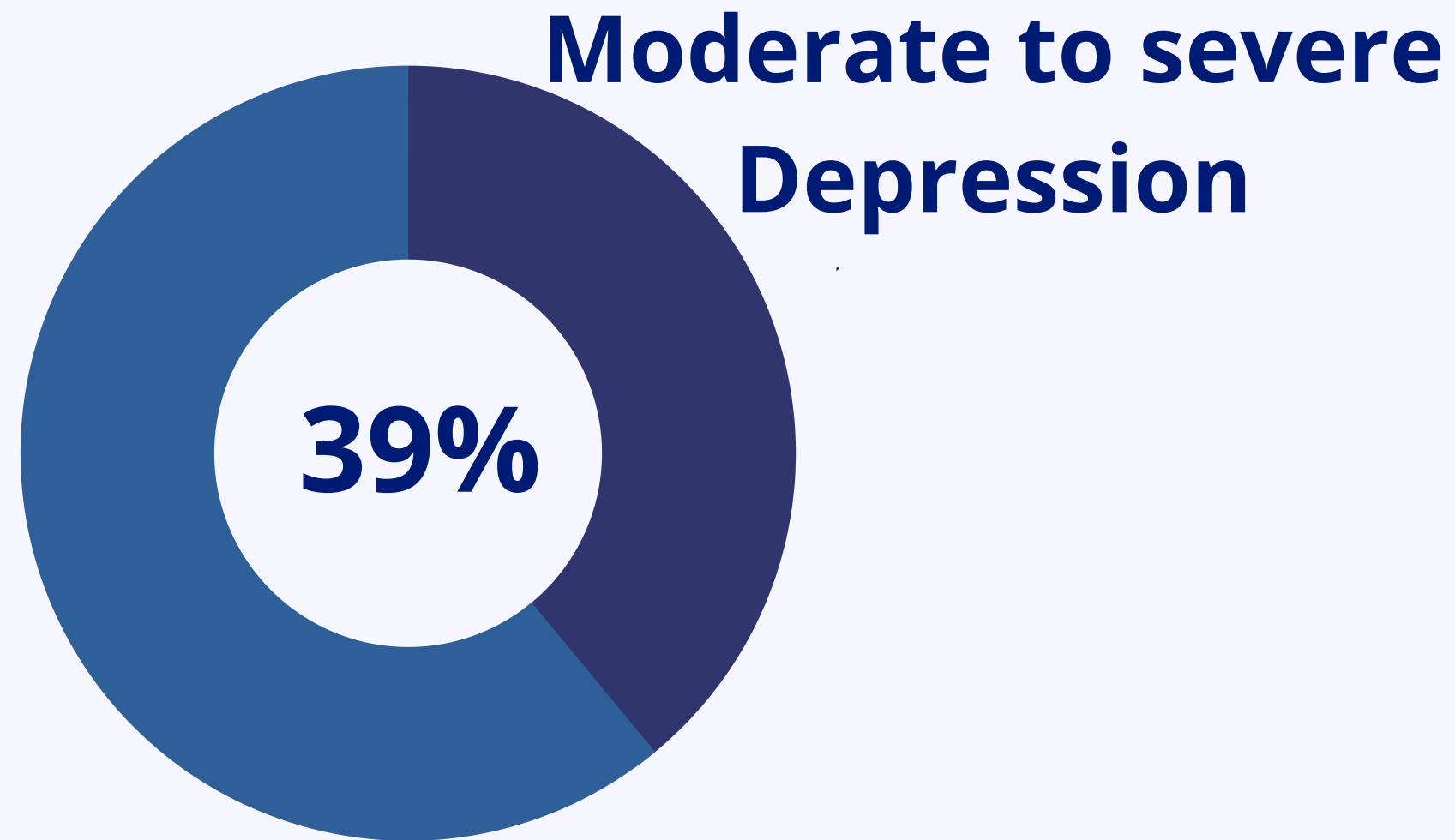
Mental Health in Academia

- Evans et al., 2018
- 2279 postgrads worldwide



Mental Health in Academia

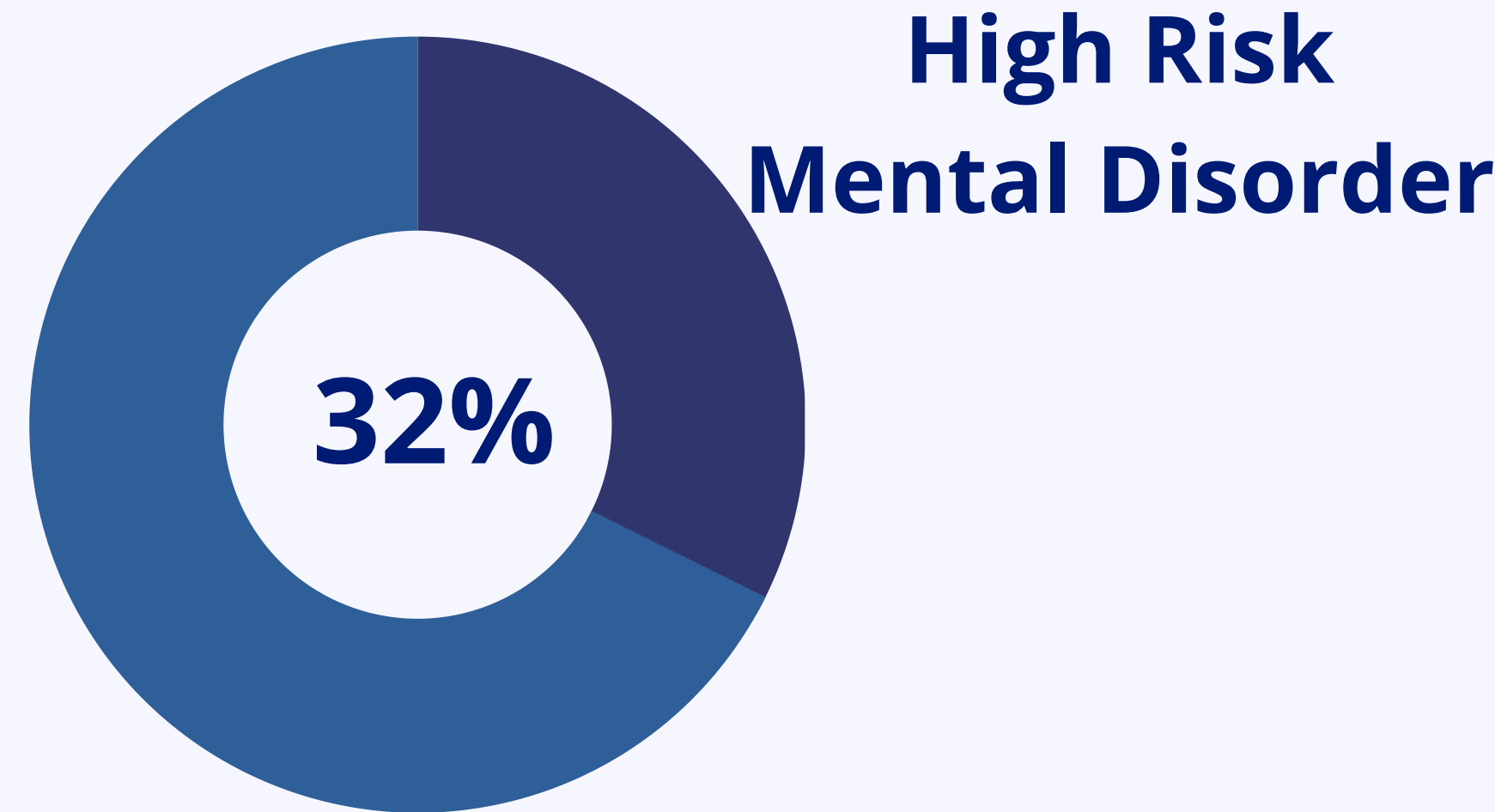
- Evans et al., 2018
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6 x more than in the general population

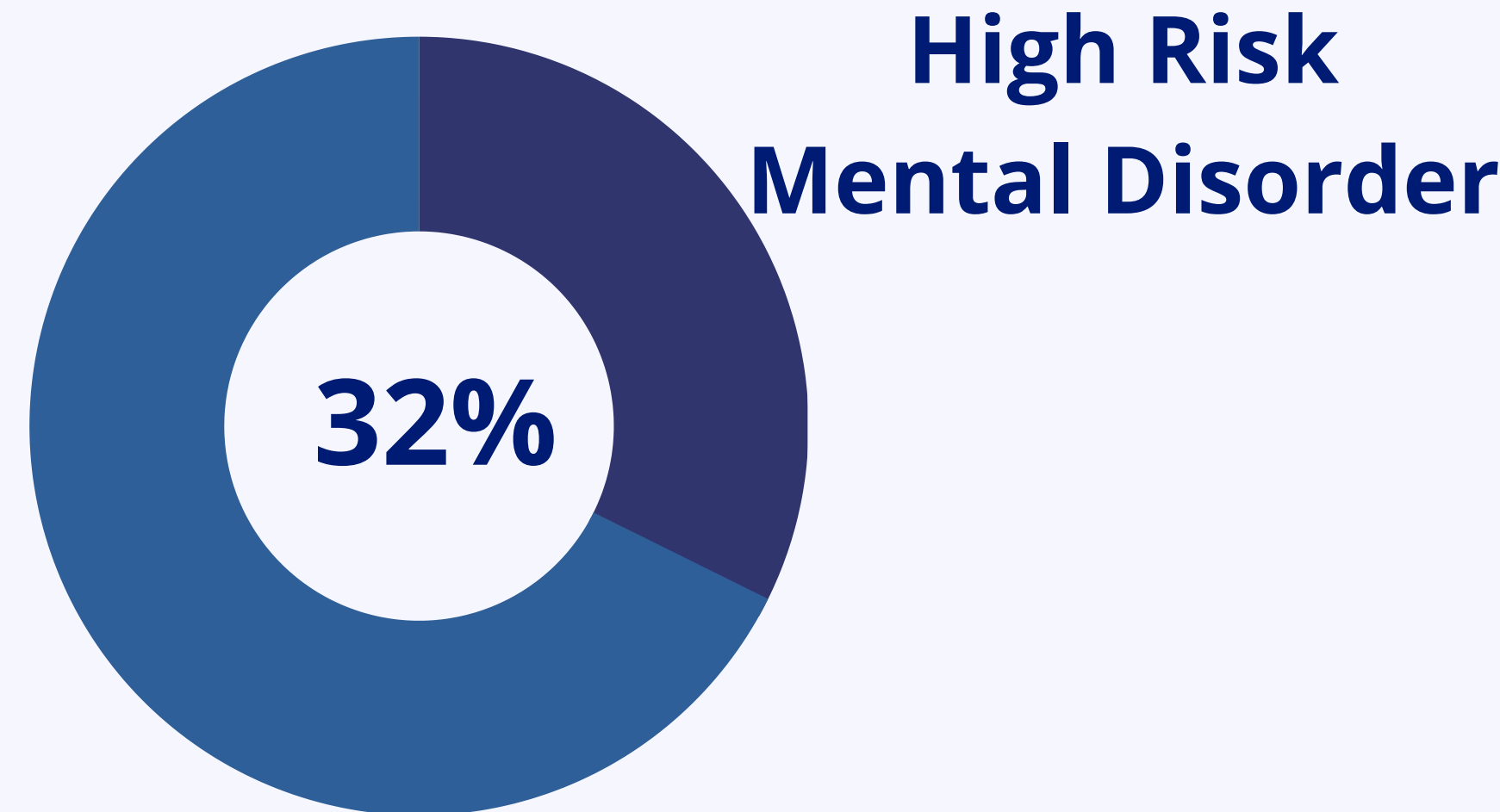
Mental Health in Academia

- Levecque et al., 2017
- 3659 PhD Candidates in Flanders, Belgium



Mental Health in Academia

- Levecque et al., 2017
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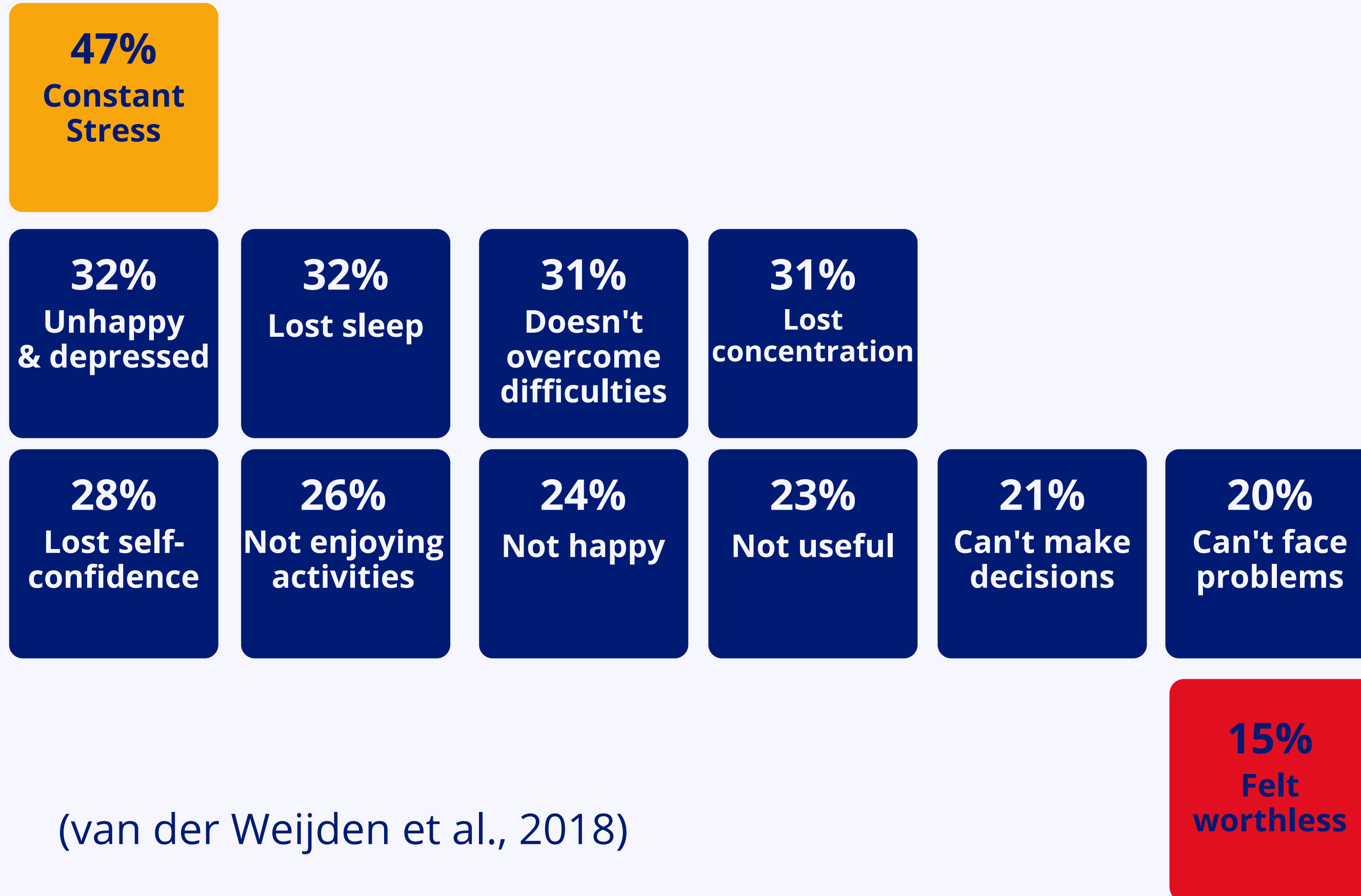


3 x more than in the general population

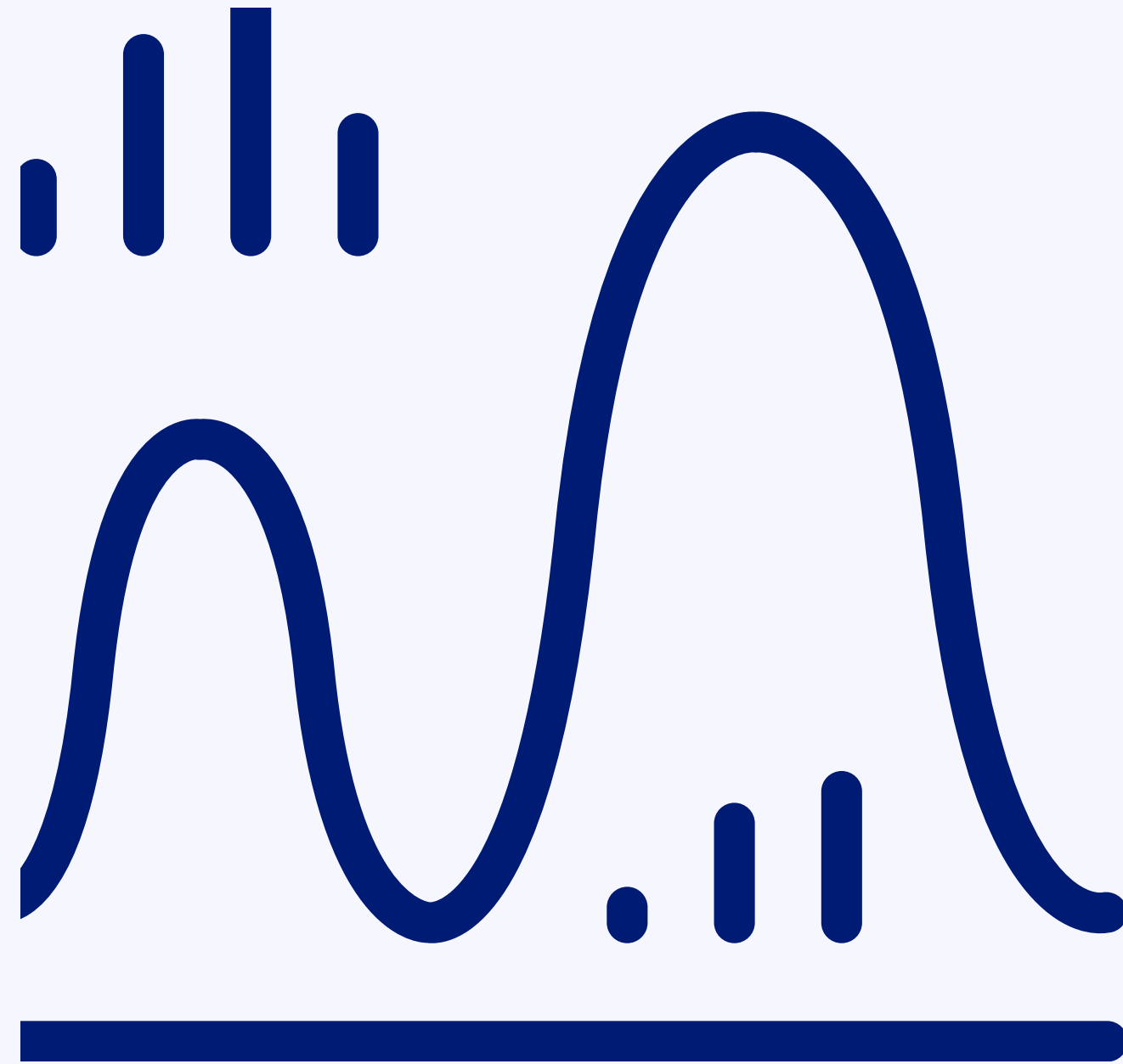
Warning 2:

We are at a **higher risk** of **developing mental health disorders** than the general population

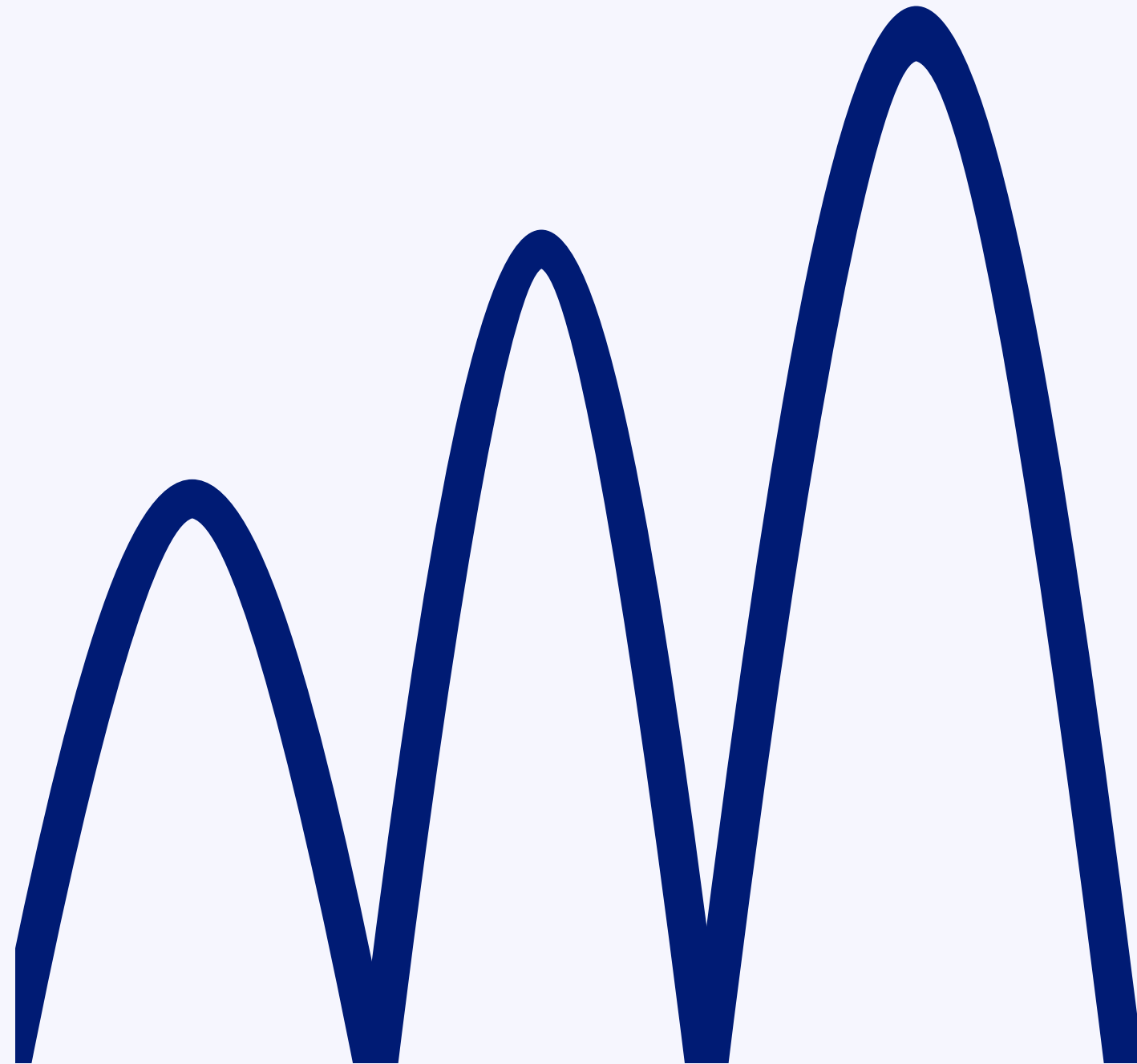
Mental Health in Academia



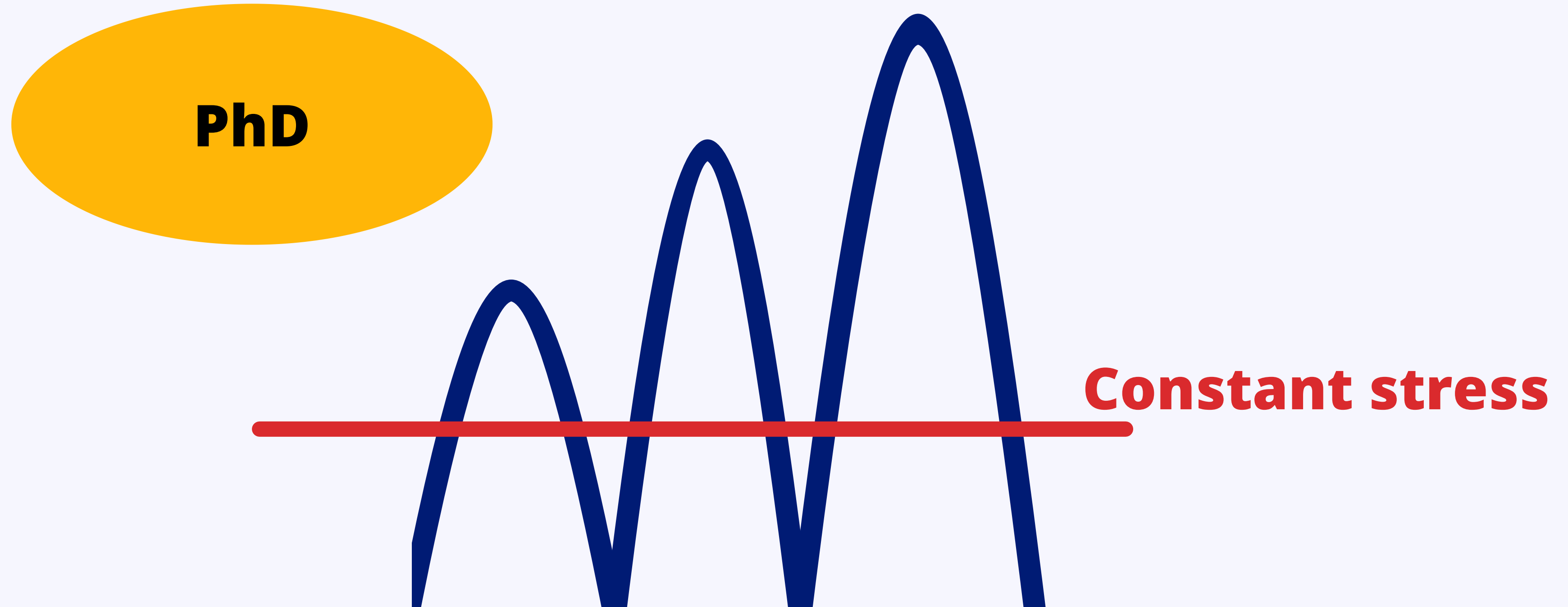
Intensity and frequency of stress



Intensity and frequency of stress



Intensity and frequency of stress



Reasons

Project, supervision-
related issues

Productivity, time

Isolation and
loneliness

Self-doubts

Future career

Financial insecurity

(Satsnky et al., 2021)

Additional Risk Factors

" Away from home"

Gender*

Cultural, ethnic,
sexual minorities

First-generation
students

Caregivers

(van der Weijden et al., 2018)

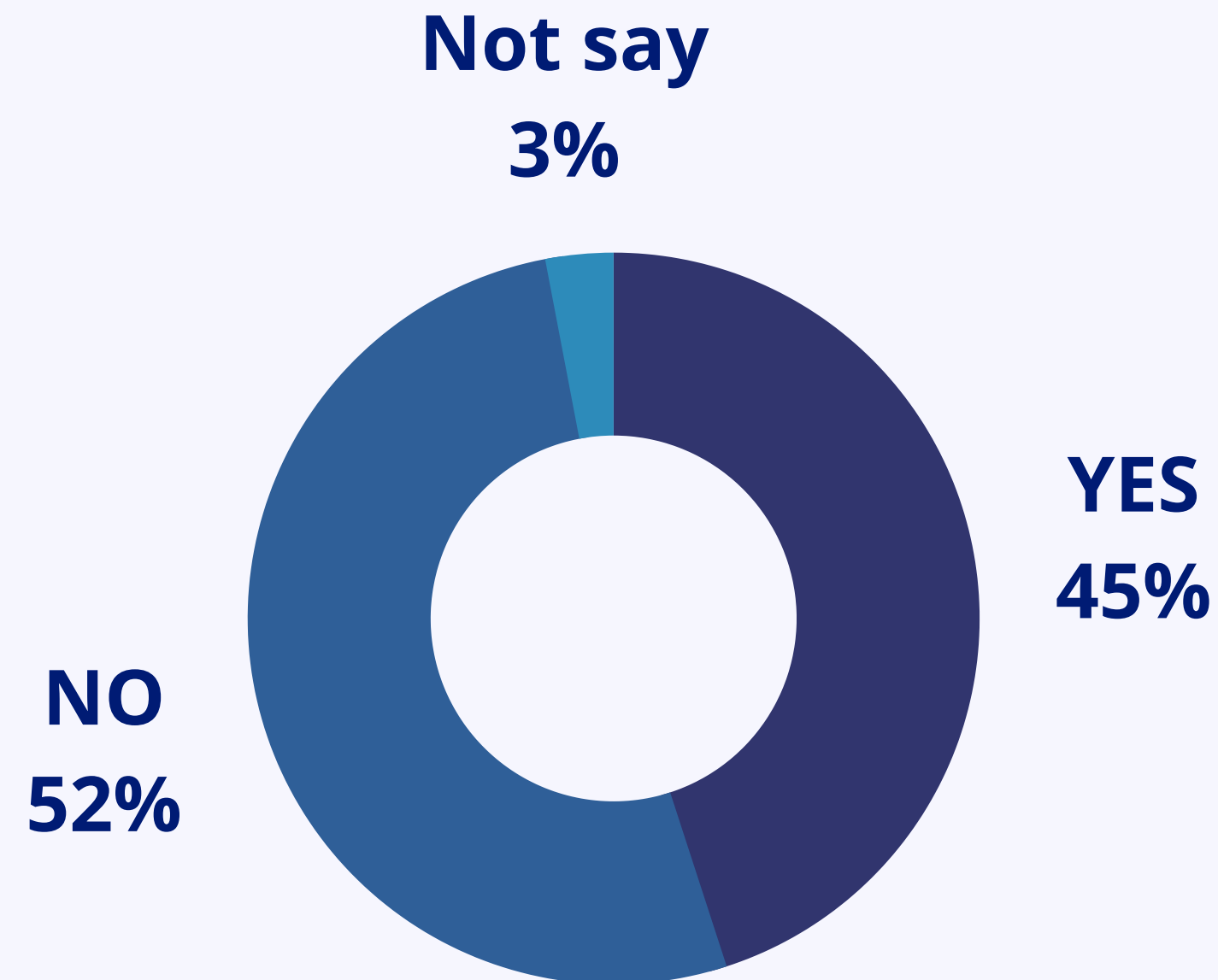
Seek for help

- **Nature Survey, 2017**
- 1574 PhD Candidates worldwide - mental health top concern

**Have you ever sought help for anxiety
or depression caused by your PhD?**

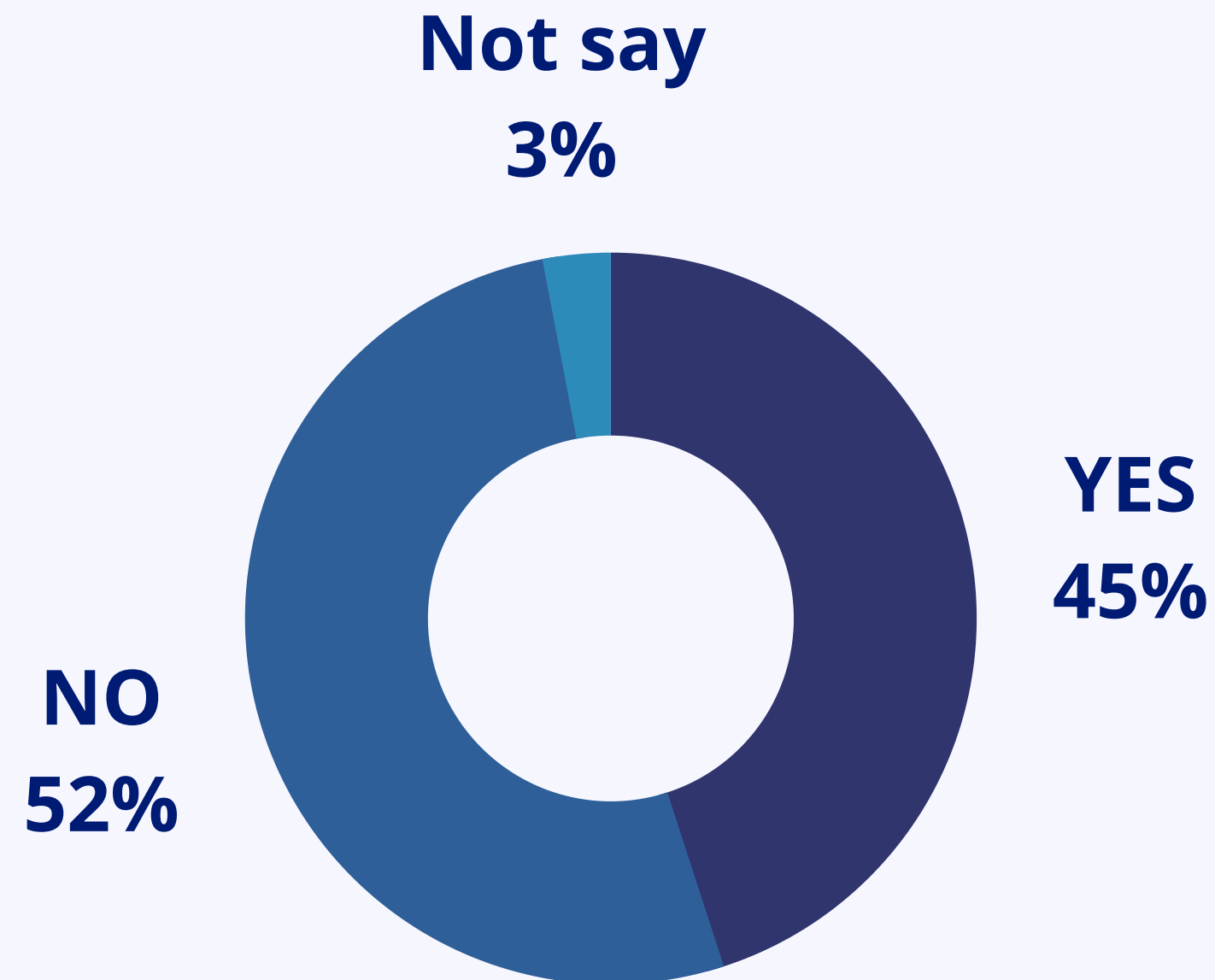
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Seek for help

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**Stigma around
mental health**

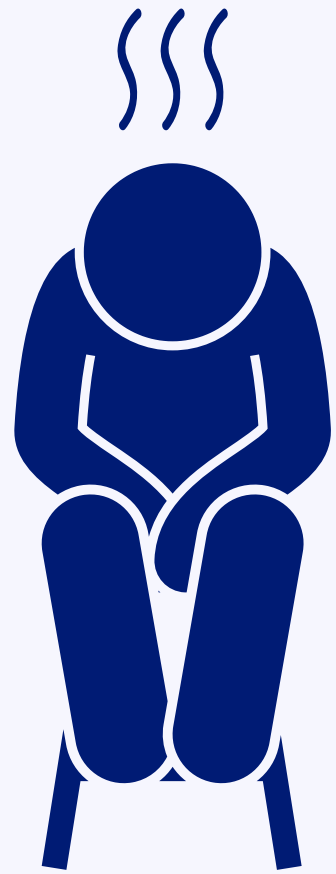
What can we do about it?

Solutions

1. Mental **health** "check-ups"



Signs of psychological suffering



Physical



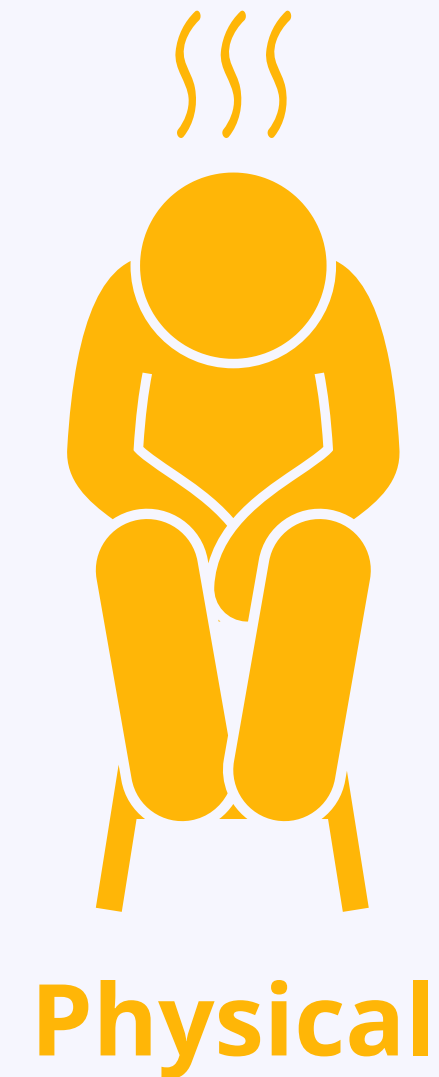
Cognitive



Emotional

Signs of psychological suffering

- Tiredness, lack of energy
- Apathy
- Sleeping problems
- Headaches, chronic pain
- Frequent sickness
- Eating disorders
- Decrease of libido



Signs of psychological suffering



Cognitive

- Constant worry
- Problems with concentration
- Forgetting
- Problems with taking decisions
- Overwhelm
- Restless thoughts
- Slow reasoning

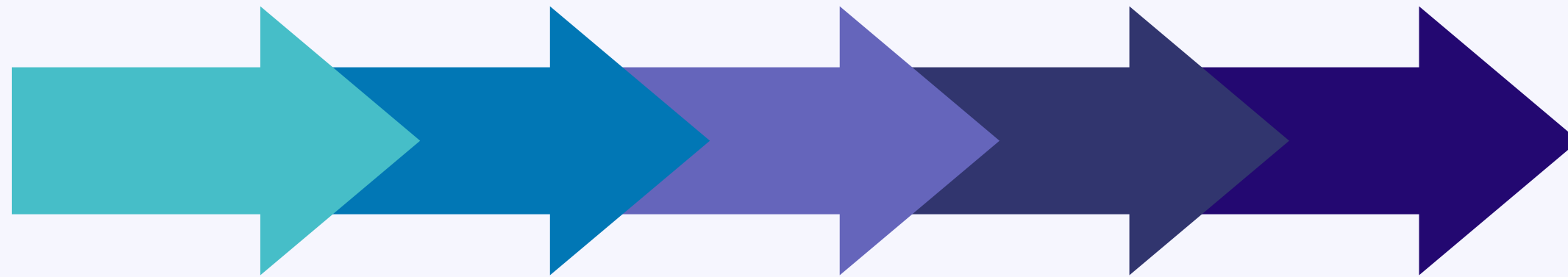
Signs of psychological suffering

- Lack of pleasure (ahedonia)
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Overacting
- Negativity



Emotional

Signs of psychological suffering

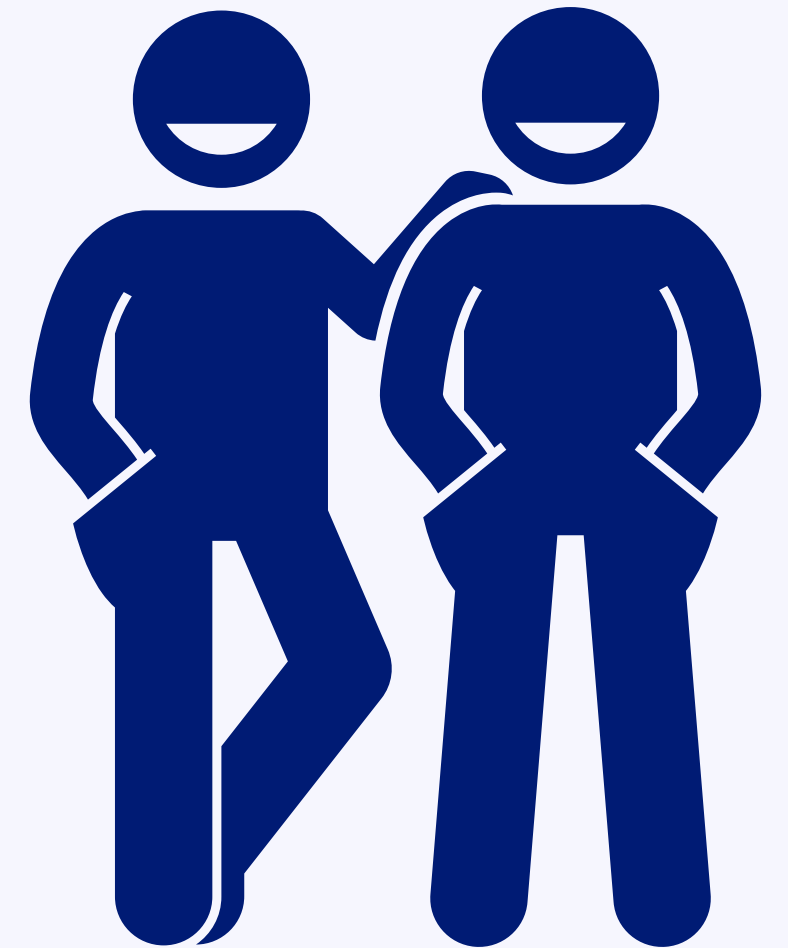


Continuum

Time

Solutions

1. Mental health "check-ups"
2. Collective responsibility

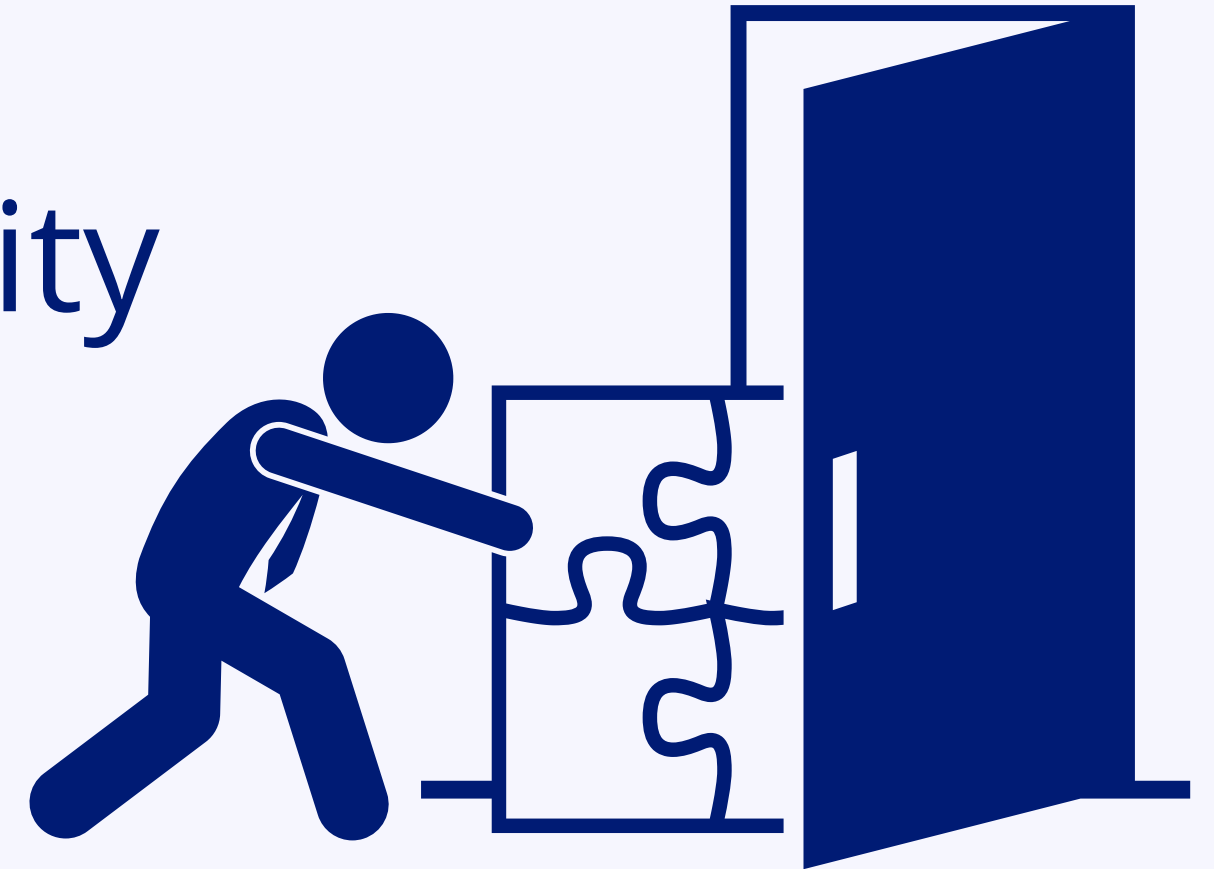


Solutions

1. Mental health "check-ups"

2. Collective responsibility

3. Prevent!





Awareness & Education



Awareness & Education

Personal Development





**Awareness
& Education**

**Personal
Development**



Peer Support

Peer-to-peer support

- **Powerful therapeutic method in psychology**
stress, depression, and burnout, as well as in preventing these problems (e.g., Ali et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2008; Pfeiffer et al., 2011)

Peer-to-peer support

- All peers are equally qualified to help each other
- Support consists of sharing knowledge or experience, providing emotional and social support, or giving practical advice (Solomon, 2004)
- Built on common trust among individuals, enabling them to express issues that are difficult to express in classical mentorship



**Awareness
& Education**

**Personal
Development**



Peer Support

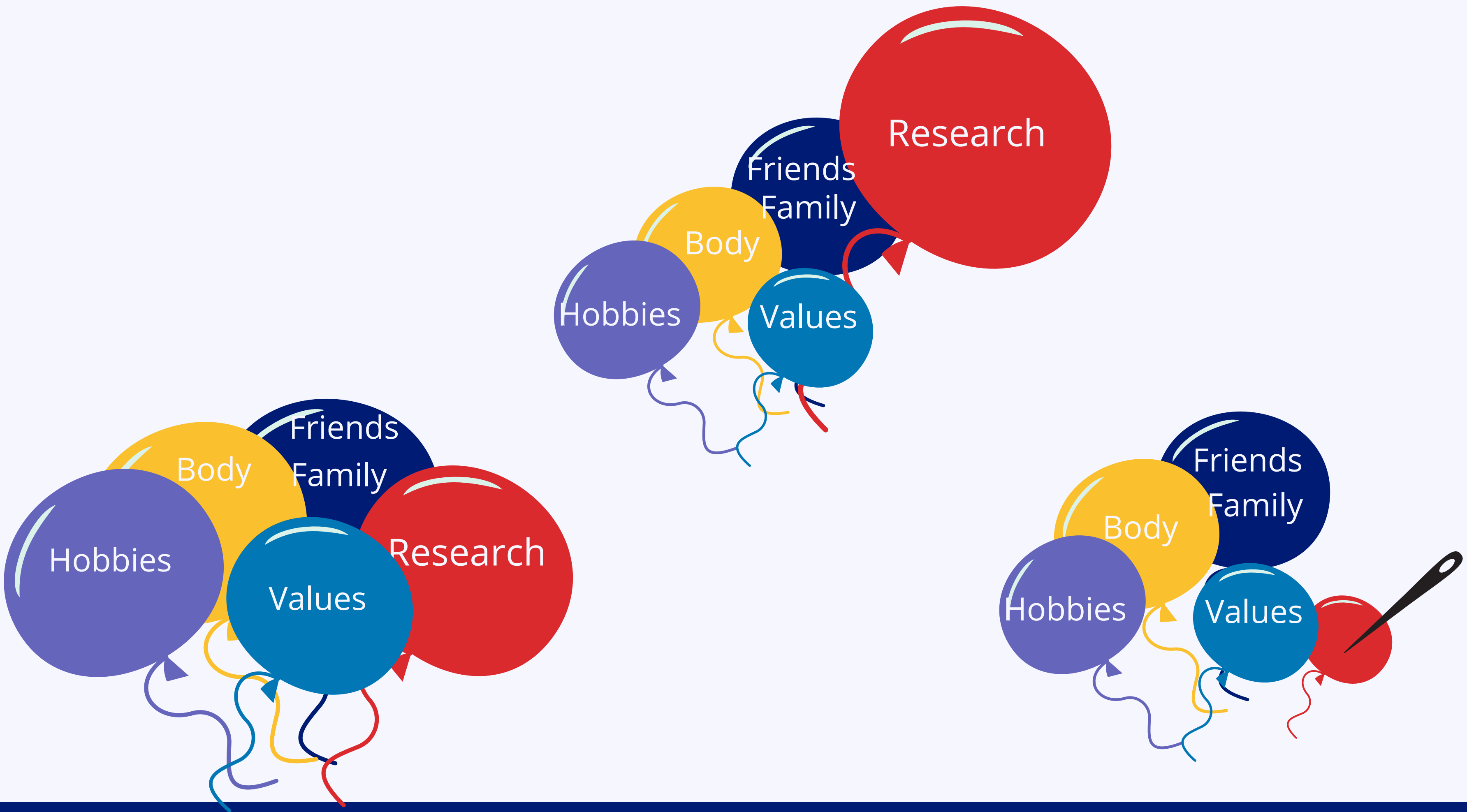
**Feeding non-
academic identities**



Well-being

Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose in life.

Dimensions: Emotional, Social, Physical, Professional, Societal



Positive effects of well-being on academic achievements:



Confidence



**Positive approach to
challenging situations**



Motivation



Resilience to stress



**More efficient at work
- better performance**



**“You need to be
well, to work well”**

(Berger et al., 2011; Bucker et al., 2018; Stenmayr et al., 2016)

Conclusion

Happier Researchers = **Better** Researchers

:-)



phdsuccess.eu



contact@phdsuccess.eu



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