SWPS University

Minister of Science
Republic of Poland

Ministry of Science and Higher Education
Republic of Poland

Mental health and well-being in the Polish academia

risk groups and methodological challenges

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Introduction and methodology of the report

The preparation of the report was funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education under an agreement number MNiSW/2024/DAP/308

Aims of this report

- A better understanding of the current situation of the Polish academic community - the first systematic assessment of the size of the problem.
- **Comparison of the pattern of results observed in Poland with the results of international studies**
- A starting point for planning:
    - preventive actions
    - interventions
    - future systematic research

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Methodology

1. Well-being, quality of life and mental health

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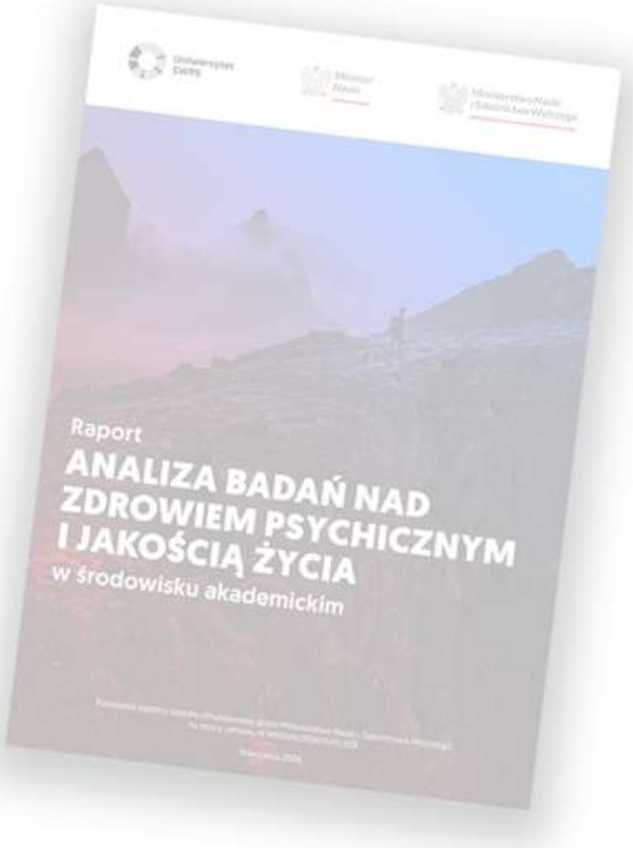
Metodologia

1. Well-being, quality of life and mental health

Słowa kluczowe (Polski)	Key words (English)
lęk/zaburzenia lękowe	anxiety/anxiety disorder
symptomy lękowe/lęku	anxiety symptoms
depresja/zaburzenia depresyjne	depression/depressive disorder
symptomy depresyjne/depresji	depressive symptoms
zdrowie psychiczne	mental health
wypalenie	burnout
stres	stress
zadowolenie	satisfaction
jakość życia	well-being
zaangażowanie	commitment/involvement
radzenie sobie ze stresem	coping
work-life balance	work-life balance
równowaga praca–dom/praca-życie	



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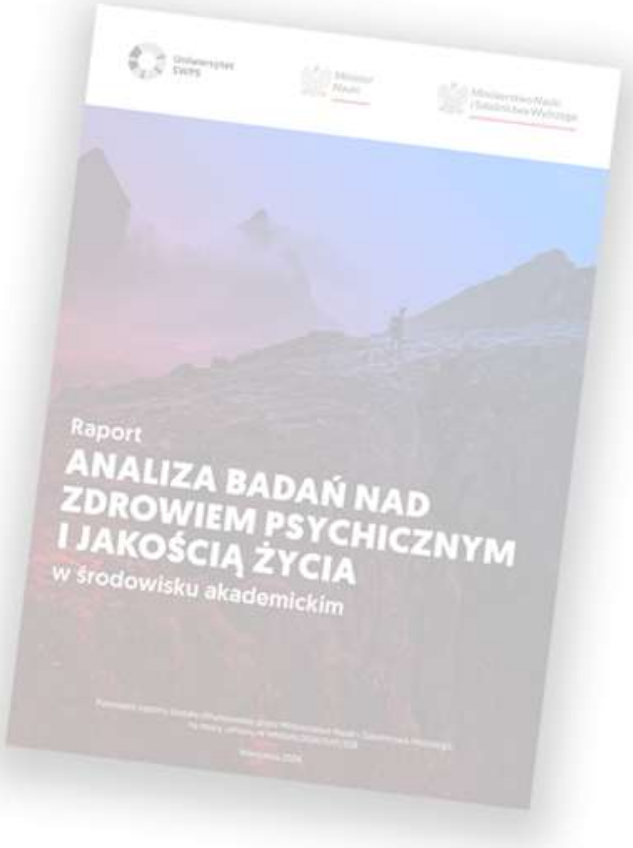
Methodology

1. Well-being, quality of life and mental health
2. Four main groups that make up the academic community



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Methodology

1. Well-being, quality of life, and mental health
2. Four main groups that make up the academic community

   - Students - at the end of 2023 (GUS): **1,245,200 thousand people**
   - Doctoral students - in 2023/2024 (GUS): **16,000 people in doctoral schools**
   - Administrative staff — at the end of 2023 (GUS) **71,817 people**
   - Academic staff - end of 2024 (Radon): **95,186 people**

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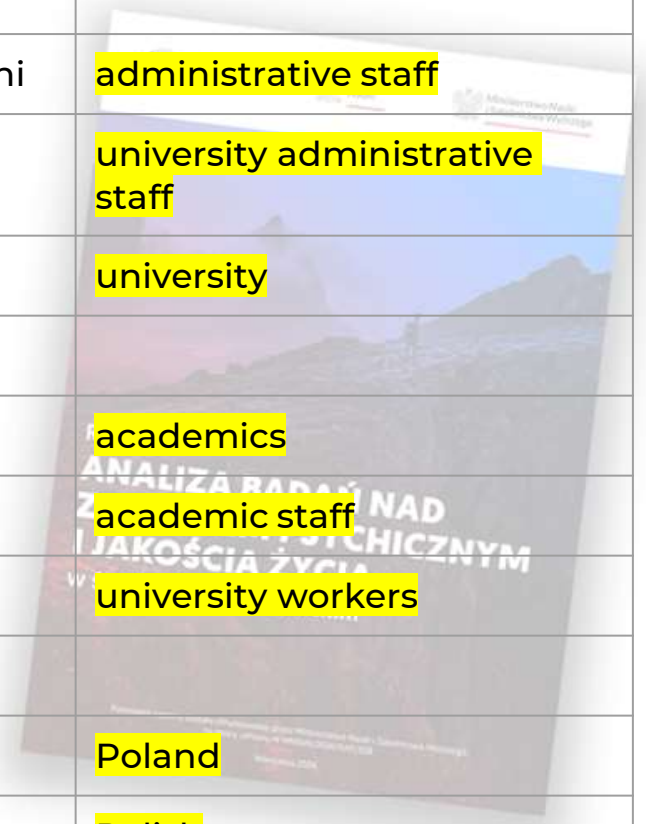
Methodology

Słowa kluczowe (Polski)	Key words (English)
studenci	students
student	student
doktorant	phd student(s)
doktoranci	phd candidates(s)
doktorantów	doctoral students
studia doktoranckie	
pracownicy administracyjni	administrative staff
administracja	university administrative staff
uniwersytet	university
uniwersytecie	
pracownicy akademiccy	academics
kadra akademicka	academic staff
naukowcy	university workers
naukowców	
	Poland
	Polish



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Methodology

1. Well-being, quality of life, and mental health
2. Four main groups that make up the academic community
3. Publication types and full-text databases

    Data from Poland (2018-2024)

    Research articles (Google Scholar, PsycInfo, PsycArticles) - 147

    Public reports - 8

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Methodology

1. Well-being, quality of life, and mental health
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    Public reports – 8

4. International data

- **systematic reviews:** a comprehensive summary of studies involving the identification, evaluation and synthesis of all available scientific evidence that has been collected in response to a specific research question in order to eliminate errors.
- **meta-analysis :** quantitative summary of the results of many independent scientific studies with similar topics in order to estimate the averaged result with greater reliability.

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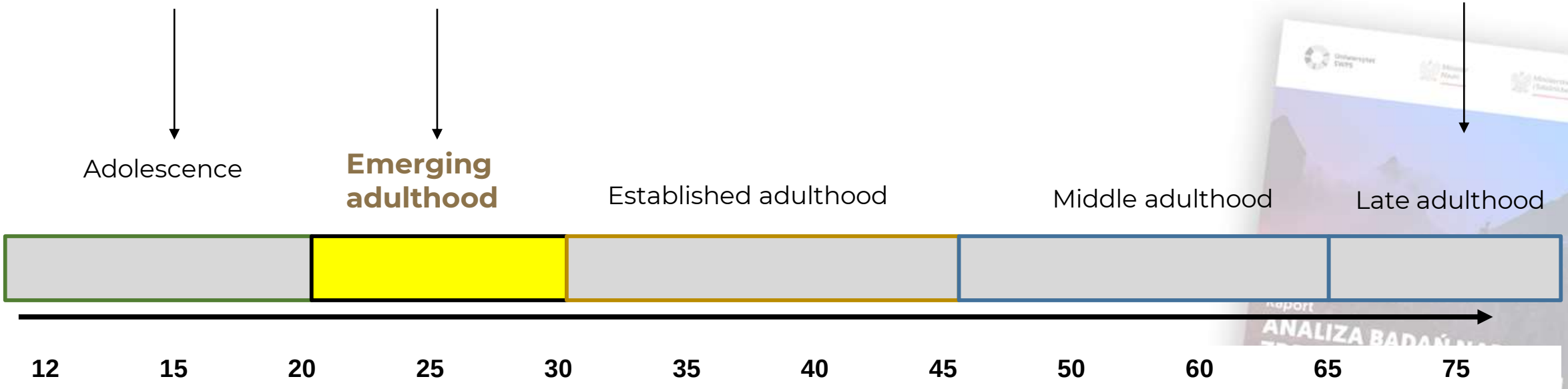
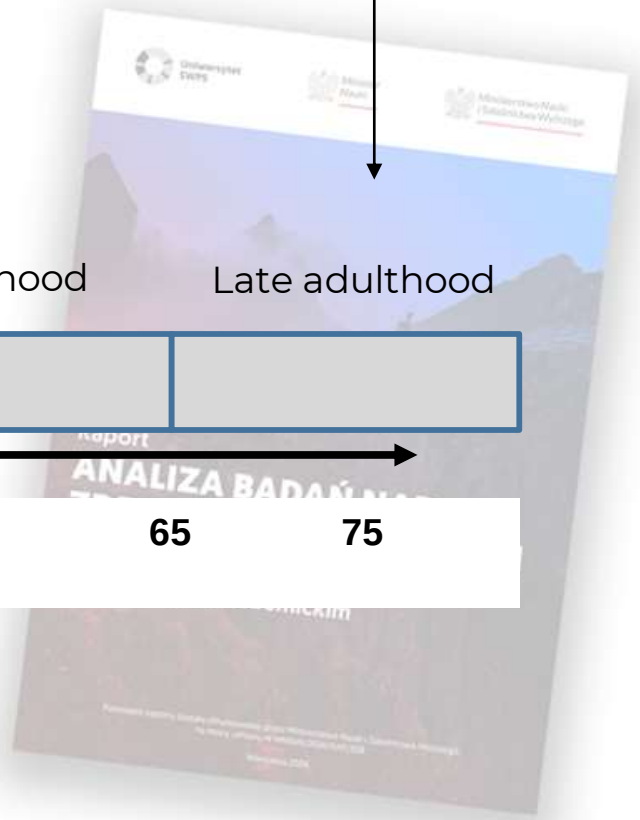
Contemporary challenges

By this age, 50% of all cases will have started

75% of all cases will start by this age

By this age, around 50% of people will experience at least one mental health disorder





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https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(23)00193-1/abstract
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/208678

Methodology of studies and results in the group of students and doctoral candidates

Powstanie raportu zostało sfinansowane przez **Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego** na mocy umowy nr MNiSW/2024/DAP/308

Publications

Students:

- 132 publications
- a total of 112,965 people
- Percentage of women from 40% to 98.5% between the ages of 17 and 64

Phd candidates:

- 3 publications
- a total of 1,071 male and female doctoral students
- percentage of women from 55.6% and 65%
- Between the ages of 24 and 50 (average about 30 years old)

The main method used by the researchers was questionnaire-based cross-sectional surveys.

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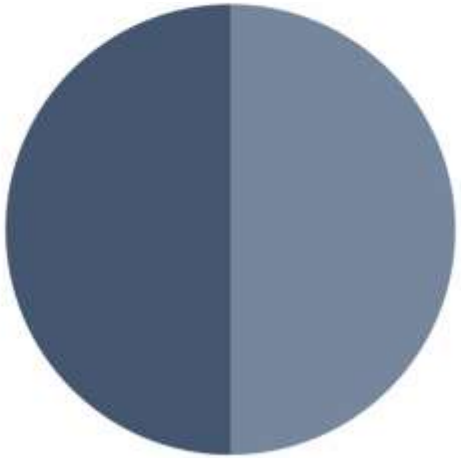
Well-being and mental health of students

Powstanie raportu zostało sfinansowane przez **Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego** na mocy umowy nr MNiSW/2024/DAP/308

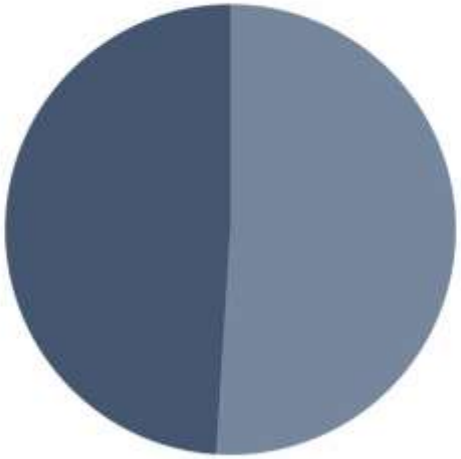
Stress, burnout, sleep difficulties

High levels of stress experienced on a daily basis



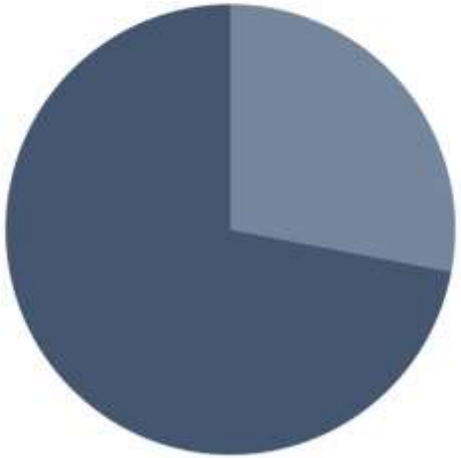
50%

Difficulty sleeping



51%

Educational burnout



28%

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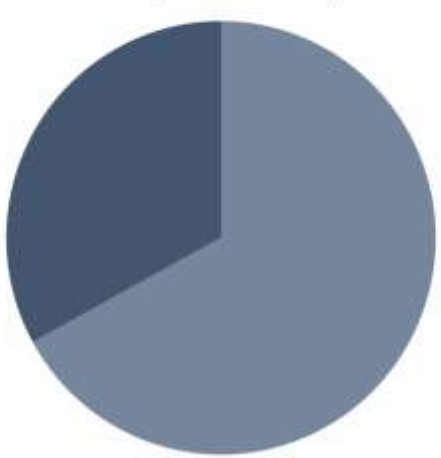
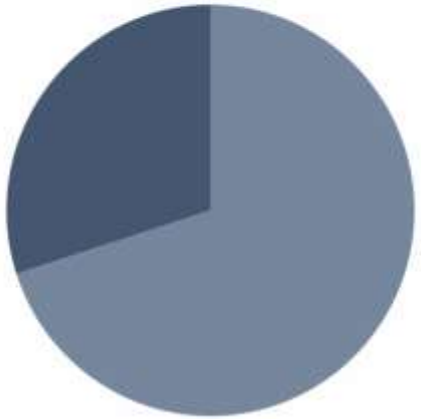
Access to psychological support at the university

University's mental health support activities described as ineffective



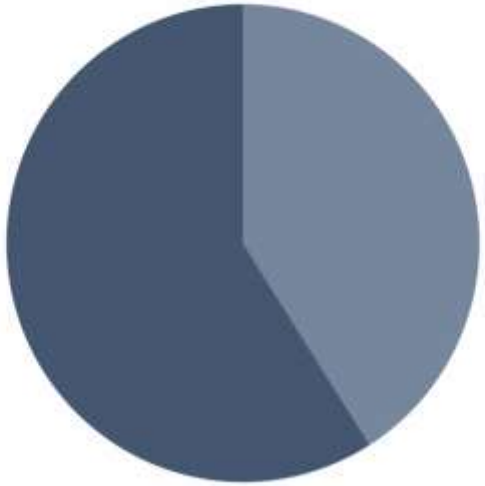
67%

Never used the psychological support offered by the university



70%

willingness to receive psychological support at university



41%

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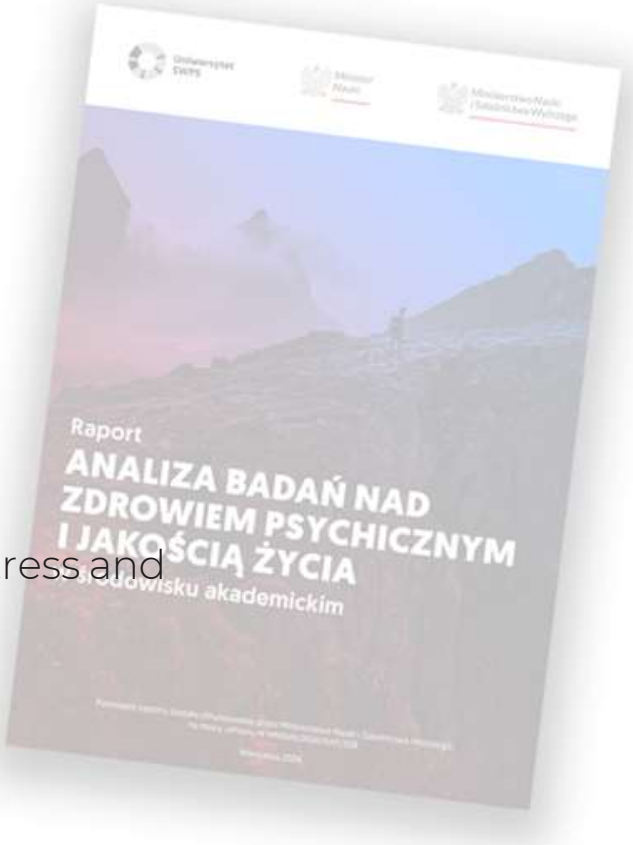
Symptoms of anxiety disorders and depression in a group of students

Polish data	Data from international literature
Severe symptoms of anxiety disorders are experienced by **30% to 65% of students**	Severe symptoms of anxiety disorders - from **10.3% to 49.94%** of those studying
Severe depressive symptoms **- from 21.98% to 22.84%**	Severe depressive symptoms **- from 23.2% to 34%**

- Female students report higher levels of anxiety, depression, and educational burnout than male students
- Those who participate exclusively or largely in online learning experience loneliness, stress and dissatisfaction with education



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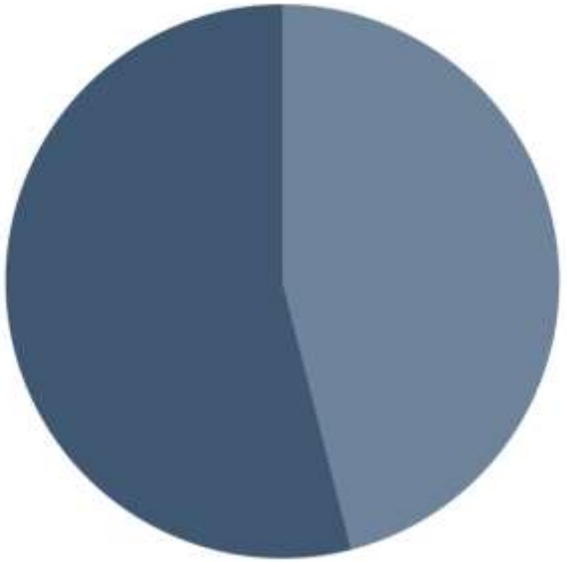
Results of the analysis in the group of doctoral students

Powstanie raportu zostało sfinansowane przez **Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego** na mocy umowy nr MNiSW/2024/DAP/308

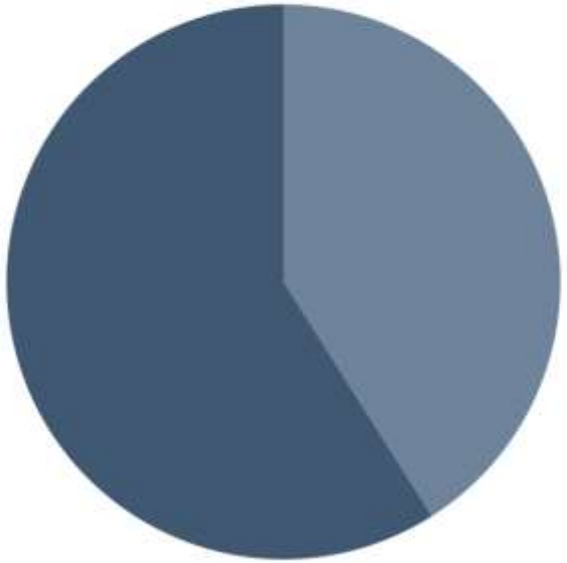
Workload

Overwhelmed by responsibilities



46%

Overworking



41%

Doctoral candidates, especially mothers, find it difficult to maintain a work-life balance

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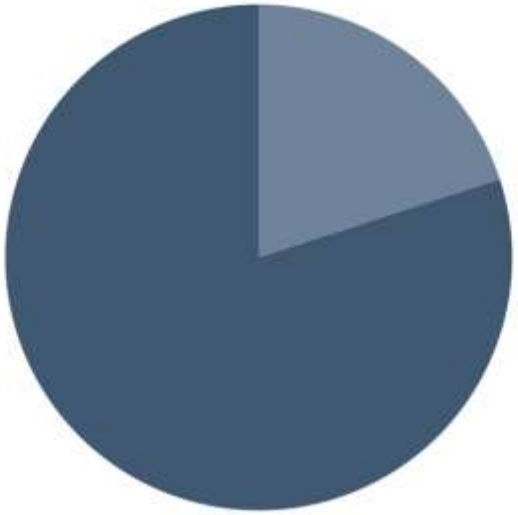
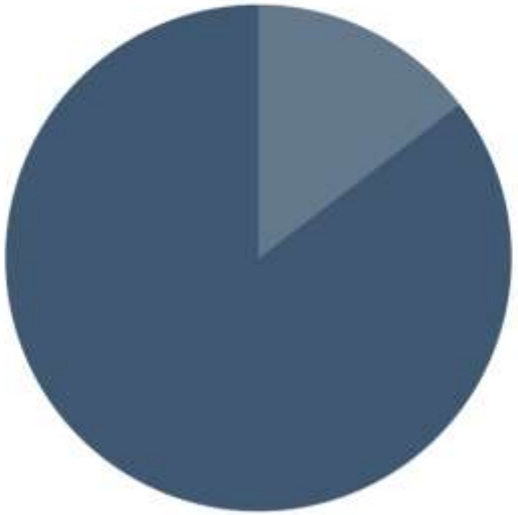
Mental health of doctoral students in Poland: prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms

Anxiety and sleep disorders



19,8%

Somatic Symptoms



15,4%

Women pursuing a doctorate are particularly prone to psychosomatic symptoms

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Mental health of doctoral students in international research

Doctoral candidates	General population
Clinically significant symptoms of depression are experienced by 24% of doctoral students	Depressive disorders are experienced by 4-5% of the general population
Clinically significant symptoms of anxiety disorders are experienced by 17% of doctoral students	Anxiety disorders are experienced by 5-11% of the general population

- Risk factors are gender (being female) and isolation

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Methodology of the studies and results of the analysis in the group of academic and administrative staff

Powstanie raportu zostało sfinansowane przez **Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego** na mocy umowy nr MNiSW/2024/DAP/308

Publications

Administrative staff	Academic staff
well-being • 2 publications • A total of 181 people • 121 people in the questionnaire survey, • 60 people in individual in-depth interviews	**mental health** • 6 publications • A total of 1,725 people between the ages of 23 and 75 (average about 42 years old)
	well-being • 6 publications • A total of 3439 people between the ages of 27 and 75 (average age about 42)

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Administrative staff's well-being

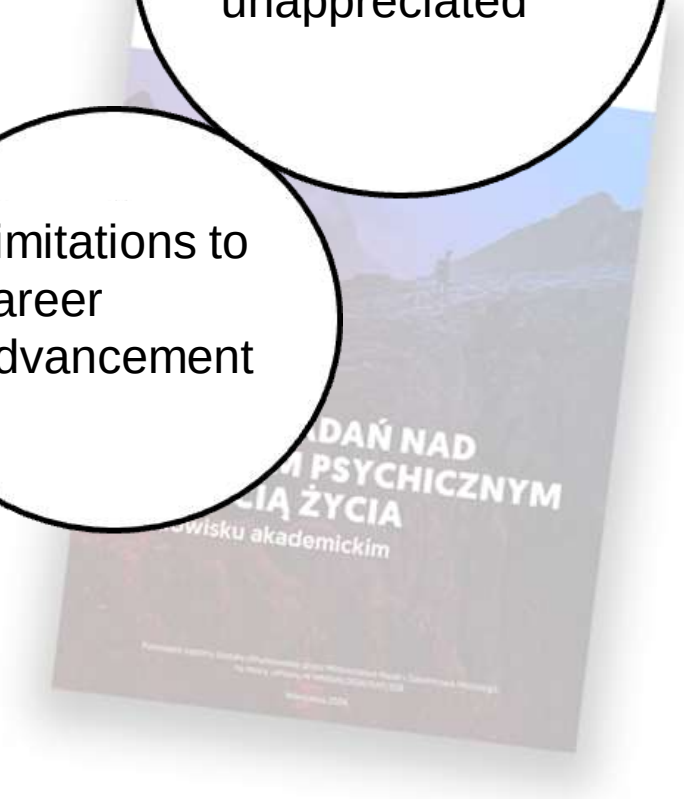
Job stability

Work-life balance

More stress is experienced by junior staff and those in direct contact with students

Feeling of being less important and unappreciated

Limitations to career advancement



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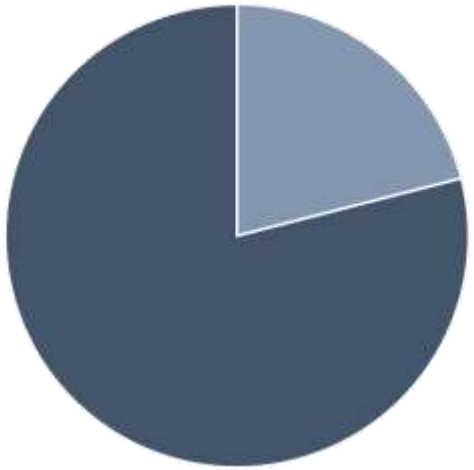
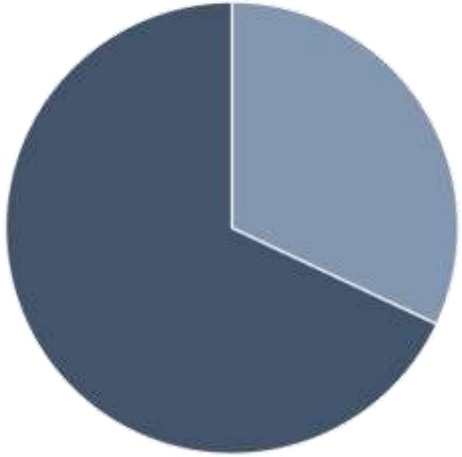
Mental health of academic staff in Poland

Severe job burnout



21 %

Severe emotional exhaustion



32%

Low sense of personal achievement

62%

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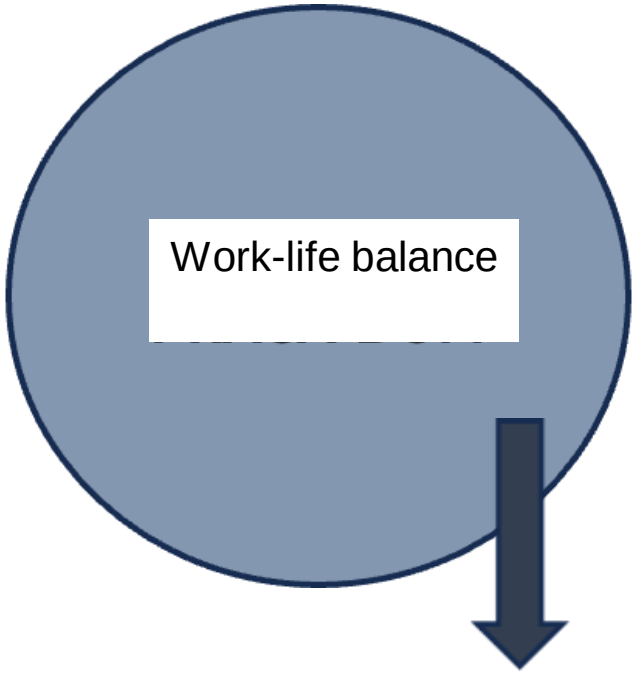
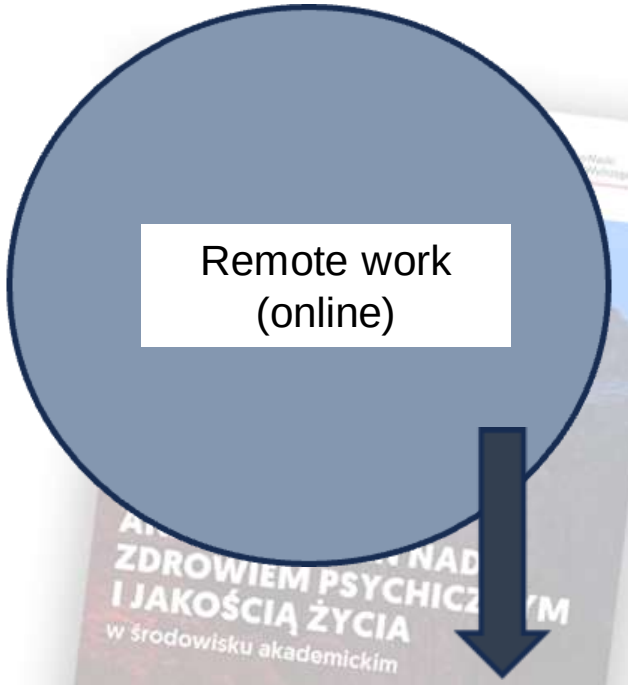
The well-being of academic staff in Poland

- **Opportunity for development**
- **Stable employment**
- **Proper pay**

Administrative duties



women



persons over 60 years of age

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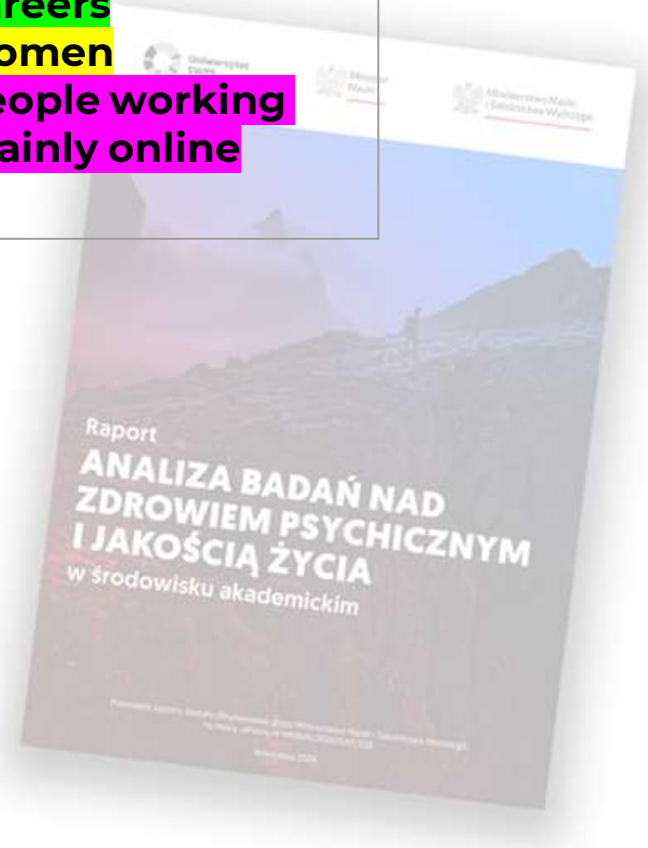
Summary

Powstanie raportu zostało sfinansowane
przez **Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego**
na mocy umowy nr MNiSW/2024/DAP/308

Risk groups

Students	Doctoral students	Administrative staff	Academics
• first-year students • women • students participating exclusively or primarily in online education	• women • PhD students without a good relationship with their supervisor	• People working in positions that require direct interaction with students	• people starting their academic careers • women • people working mainly online



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Protective factors

- **Students –** access to effective, evidence-based support programs at university
- **PhD students -** quality of relationship with supervisor; informal meetings between scientists and PhD students
- **Academic staff** - support in administrative work; autonomy in performing duties

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Proposed research direction

- A multi-year study conducted simultaneously at several Polish universities
- Initially involving first-year students just beginning their studies
- Students surveyed several times until graduation (or even longer)

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Thank you for your attention

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