

PhD Life in Balance:

Insights from the Bielefeld Questionnaires

Health Management:

Zita Deptolla & Mats Huwendiek

Doctoral Researchers' Day, 26.06.2025, University Bielefeld



Agenda

- ✓ Mentimeter Questions
- ✓ Background: State of Research, Data from our Projects
- ✓ Health Management, Support Services and (Counseling) Offers at Bielefeld University
- ✓ Time for discussion: Questions, wishes, suggestions, experiences?

Why is the topic of **health** **important** in a **doctorate**?

(Mentimeter results)



A word cloud visualization of Mentimeter results. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'mental health' being the largest and most central word. Other prominent words include 'balance', 'stress', 'work life balance', 'long-term survival', 'sustainability', 'base for working', 'productivity', 'social health', 'boosts coping with stress', '3-5 years of my life', 'important for focus', 'health is the base', 'it will not work without', 'it is an integral part', 'it will help you enjoy', 'only thing that matters', 'success', and 'keeping up the energy'. The words are color-coded in shades of blue, red, and purple.

keeping up the energy
only thing that matters
success
long-term survival
sustainability
work life balance
it will help you enjoy
base for working
balance
stress
mental health
mental load
it is an integral part
productivity
it will not work without
social health
boosts coping with stress
health is the base
important for focus
3-5 years of my life

Results to the question “What does *health* mean to you?”

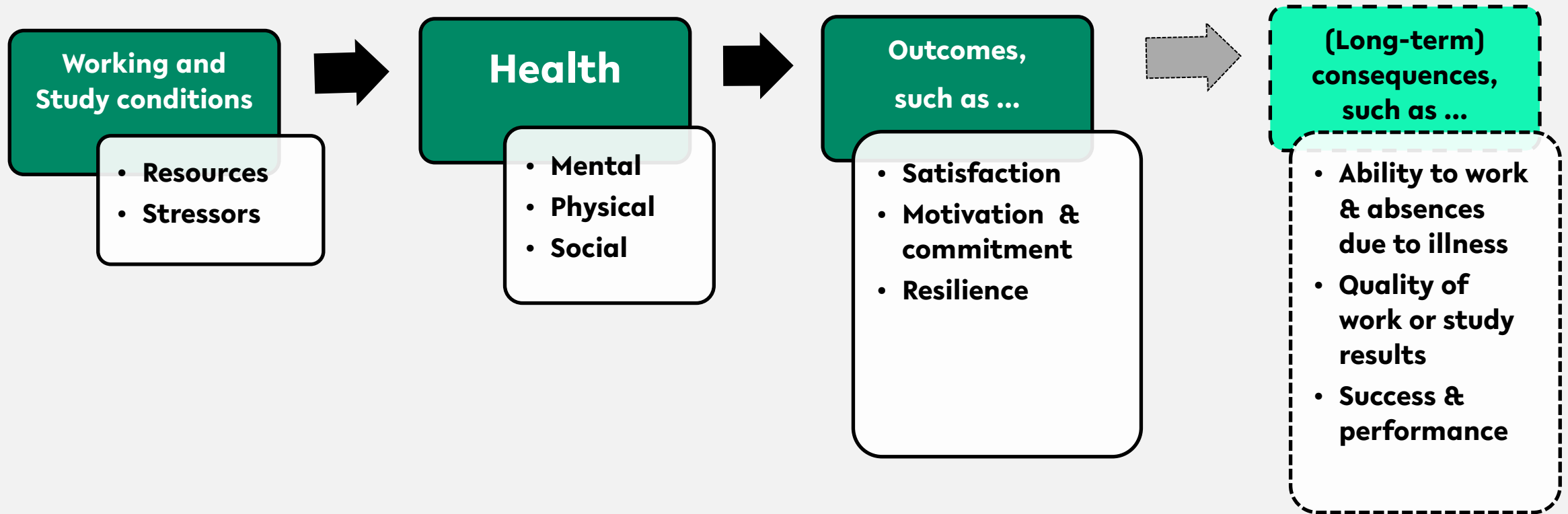


Exemplary research results

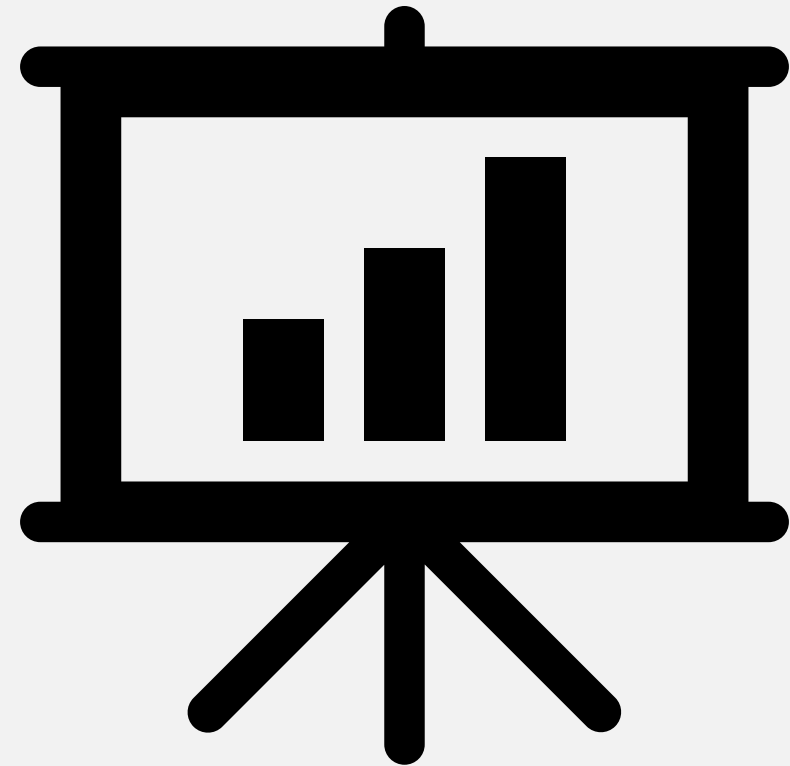
Close link between work/study and health:

- Work-related mental stress is at a high level and has risen in recent years (Badura, 2017; DGUV, 2025)
- Absences due to illness are closely linked to workloads (bpb, 2021)
- Musculoskeletal disorders are the most common, followed by mental illnesses (Dragano, 2023)
- Working conditions and personal factors interact with your own health (Heid, Hinz, & Schlink, 2016, BAuA, 2025)
- University context is not excluded here (especially due to increasing performance orientation and increasing competition) (Esdar, Steinke, Burian, Steinmann & Unnold, 2016)

Work / Studying and Health



Data from our Projects



StudiBiFra (2023)



13 universities



24,533
participating
students



June 2021 – March
2023

Employee Survey at Bielefeld University (2023)



405 participating
PhD students

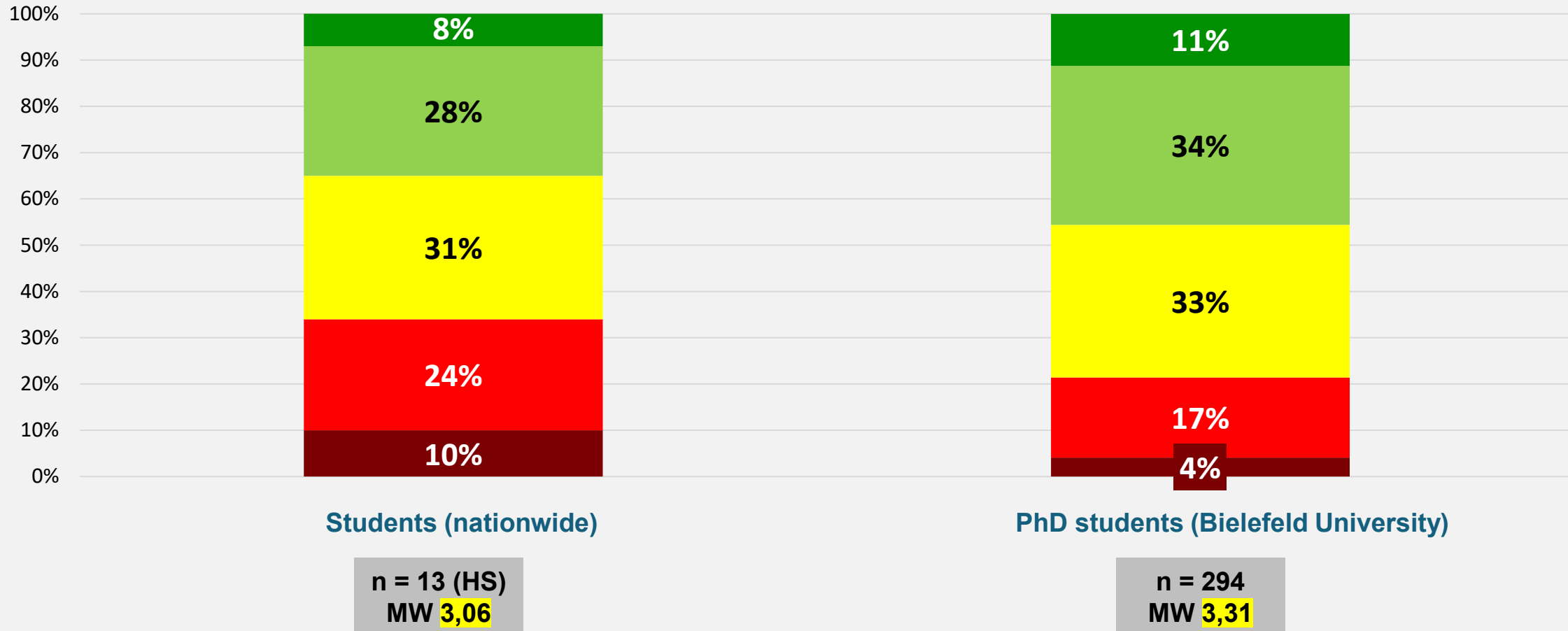


19.09. –
09.11.2023

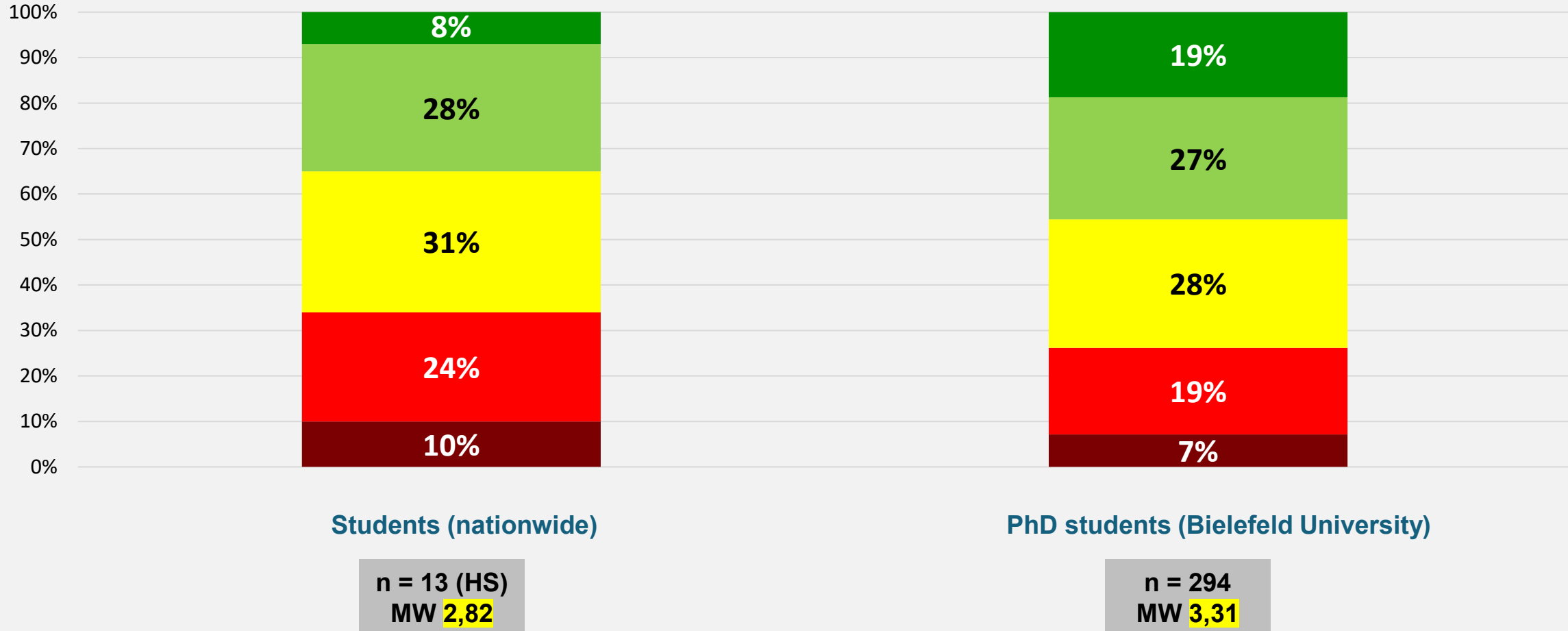


How's everybody doing?

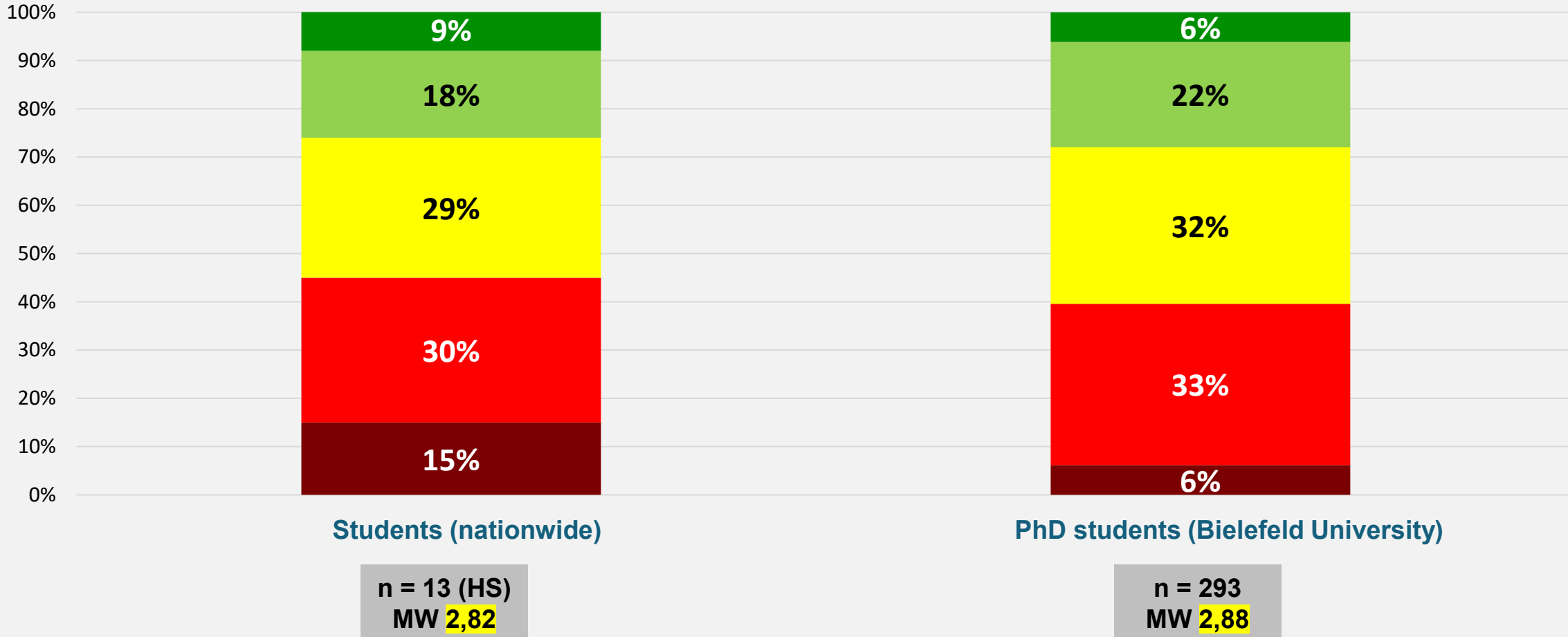
I have been calm and balanced.
((almost) never – rarely – occasionally – often – (almost) always)



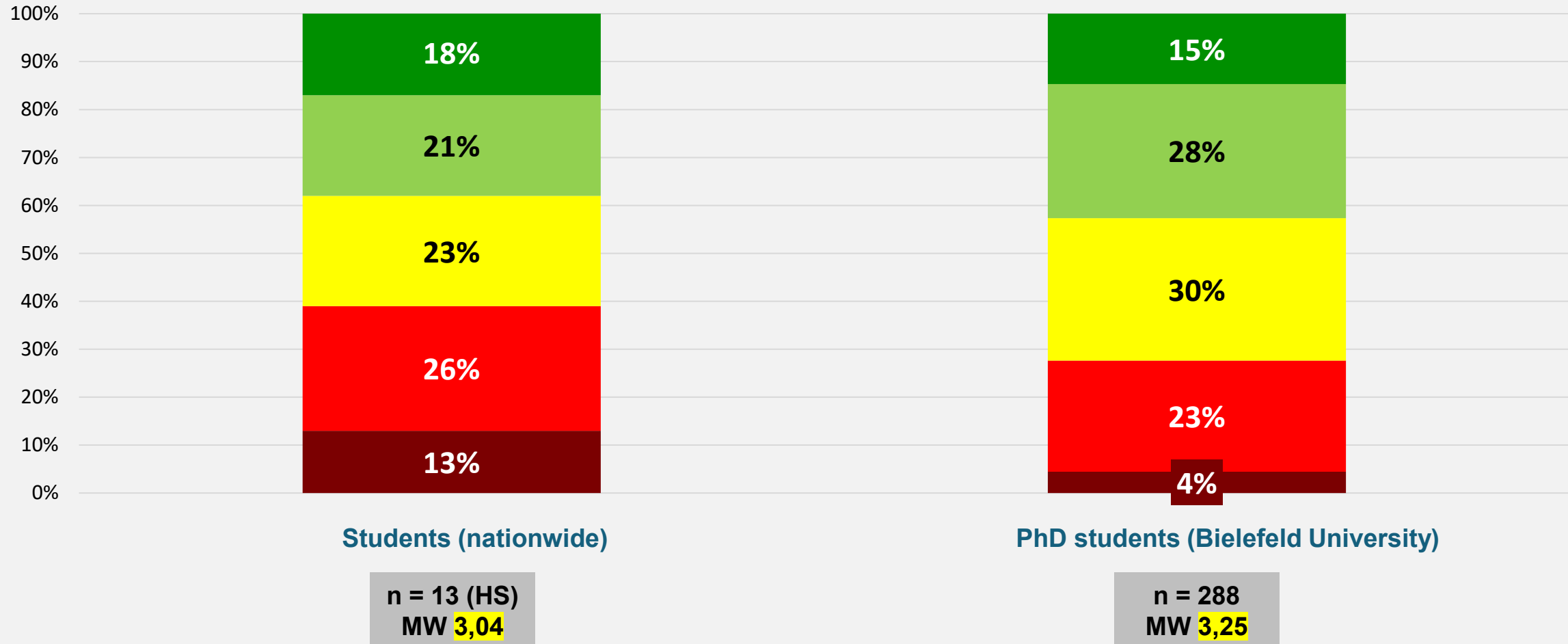
I was able to recover during my study/work-free time.
((almost) never – rarely – occasionally – often – (almost) always)



I had difficulties concentrating.
((almost) never – rarely – occasionally – often – (almost) always)



I found it difficult to enjoy anything.
((almost) never – rarely – occasionally – often – (almost) always)





Do you see **yourselves**
in these **results?**

Bielefeld Questionnaires: Resources and Burdens (selection)



Being openly welcomed by
colleagues/students

Working with/for students

Feeling enriched by working with
international students/employees

Having enough room for manoeuvre

Being given an adequate amount of
responsibility by superiors/lecturers



Having a high workload

Having a fixed term contract

Having to do too many things at
once

Being under time pressure

Job perspectives in academia



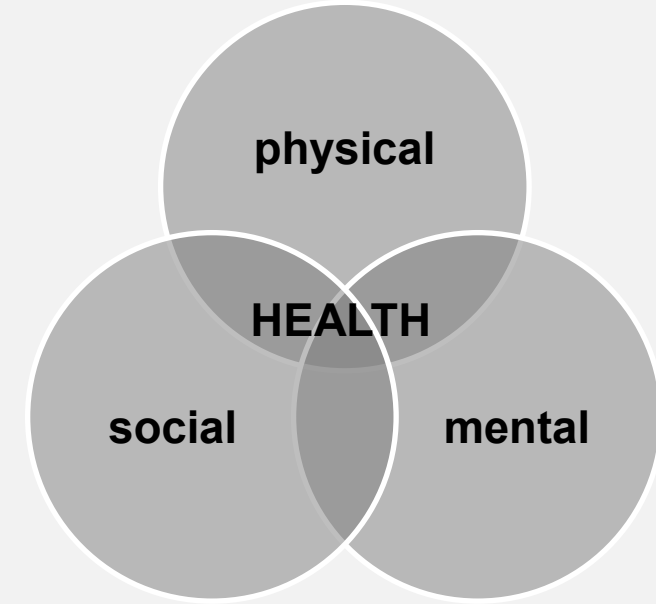
UNIVERSITÄT
BIELEFELD

Gesundheitsmanagement

Health Management „Campus in Balance“ Bielefeld University



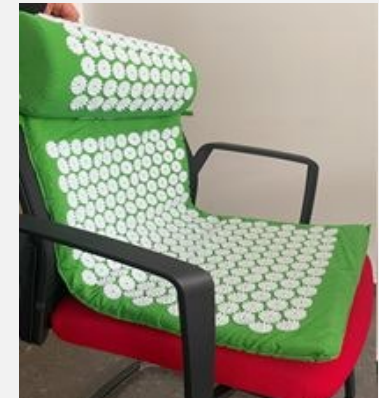
Health Management Bielefeld University



- Central point of contact for the topic of health
- Goal: Maintaining and improving the physical, mental, and social health of all members of the university → by reducing stress and strengthening resources
- Structural- and behavioral-oriented approach
- Health as a cross-sectional topic → Placing the topic of health in relevant organisational processes, e.g. management development, onboarding, personnel development, degree programme development, campus design

Examples of offers provided

- General counselling on the topic of health in the work or study place
- Health courses (e.g., yoga, pilates, fitness, dancing) & Massage services
- Workshops to teach health skills (e.g., „The skill of relaxing“)
- Customised formats for working groups to improve team health
- Video clips with short practical tutorials for various topics (e.g., stop recurring thoughts, reduce stress levels)
- Handouts to read, e.g. on short breathing mediation, short relaxation breaks, ergonomic design of homeoffice-situations
- participatory offers such as surveys or days of action
- "Healthy boxes" (to borrow) for longer sitting occasions: Ergonomic seating options and materials to support concentration and mental well-being



Health-related contact points

Bielefeld University



Support Services and (Counseling) Offers (1)

- **Graduate and Academic Career Development Centre (GrACe):**
 - Help and counselling tailored to the needs of doctoral students
 - Transferable Skills Workshops (PEP), also individually designed for Research Training Groups, Graduate Schools, etc.
 - Bielefeld Young Researchers' Fund (BNF)
 - Mentoring programme *movement*
 - Doctoral advice
 - Postdoc advice

Support Services and (Counseling) Offers (2)

- **Central Student Advisory Service (ZSB):** study advice and information as well as psychological counseling
- **Counseling Center for Employees and Supervisors:** e.g., for problems at the workplace, personal stress situations
- **Lili Goes Mental:** University group with a focus on destigmatization and raising awareness of mental health issues
- **Subject-related advice** from the student advisory service of the respective faculty
- **Family Service:** Advice for students and employees with care responsibilities
- **International Office (IO):** Advice, study support, and leisure activities for international students
- **Career Service:** central advice center for questions about professional orientation and career planning

Support Services and (Counseling) Offers (3)

- **Center for Teaching and Learning (ZLL):** Writing advice, psychosocial advice and career advice for doctoral students; various advisory services for teaching staff
- **Central Contact Point Barrier-free (ZAB):** Central point of contact for all matters relating to accessibility and active participation of people with disabilities or chronic illnesses
- **University Sports:** Many sports courses for students, break express etc.
- **Workplace, Health and Environmental Protection (AGUS):** Central service unit as a point of contact for questions relating to work and health protection
- **General Students' Committee of Bielefeld University (AStA):** Representing the interests of the student body; wide range of services and advice and organization of various events

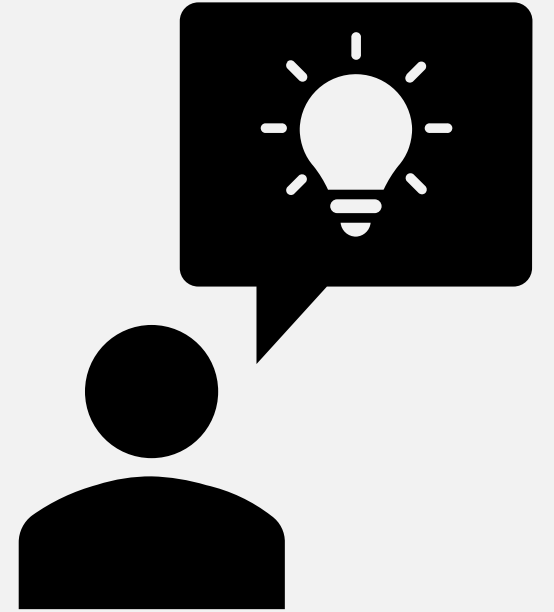
How can you participate?

We ♥ cooperations
& shared projects.

We ♥ feedback,
suggestions,
exchange etc.

We offer visits to
lectures and
seminars.

... and much
more ...



What would you like to see for your health promotion at Bielefeld University? (Mentimeter results)

prevention is better

failure ted talks

relaxation workshops

courses for workloads

Rechteckiges Ausschneiden

managing stress

mental workshops

chronic illness support

improve commute by bike

*What do **you** think?*

- **Why do PhD students (still) rate their health better than students? Would you expect a different trend in the future?**
- **What advice would you give to PhD students to take care of their own health right from the start?**

*What do **you** think?*

- **How openly is mental and physical health discussed at your faculty or in your work environment?**
- **Is there a good level of stress for you? And do you have the feeling that you can assess this realistically?**
- **What role do breaks and free time play in your productivity and well-being?**

Feedback for today's Doctoral Researchers' Day



References

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- **Kauffeld, S., Ochmann, A., & Hoppe, D. (2019).** Arbeit und Gesundheit. *Arbeits-, Organisations- und Personalpsychologie für Bachelor*, 305-358.

***Thank you
for your attention!***

**You can find all current offers, events, contact points
and persons to contact as well as further information
on our homepage:**



www.uni-bielefeld.de/gesundheit

Or contact us directly:

By telephone: (0521) 106-57305

By e-mail: campusinbalance@uni-bielefeld.de