UNDERSTANDING THE OBSTACLES OF STUDY ABROAD: STUDENT- AND UNIVERSITY-LEVEL FACTORS
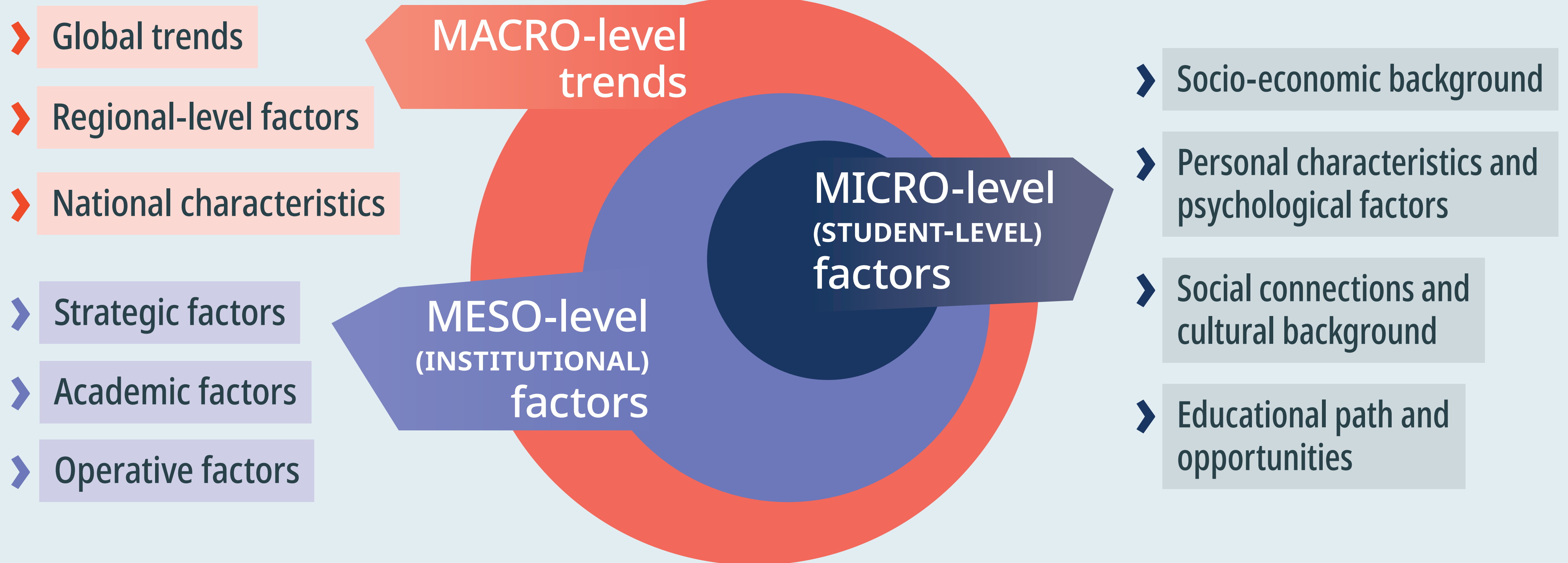
Poster presenter:
Georgina Kasza PhD, Tempus Public Foundation

Factors influencing student mobility

Numerous studies have attempted to identify the factors that influence study abroad over the past decades. Recent research has highlighted that student-level factors only partially explain the lack of participation in mobility activities, as the university environment also significantly influences the likelihood of participation.

> Global trends

> Regional-level factors

> National characteristics

> Strategic factors

> Academic factors

> Operative factors

MACRO-level trends

MESO-level (INSTITUTIONAL) factors

MICRO-level (STUDENT-LEVEL) factors

> Socio-economic background

> Personal characteristics and psychological factors

> Social connections and cultural background

> Educational path and opportunities

- objective and subjectively perceived obstacles
- objective and subjectively perceived obstacles
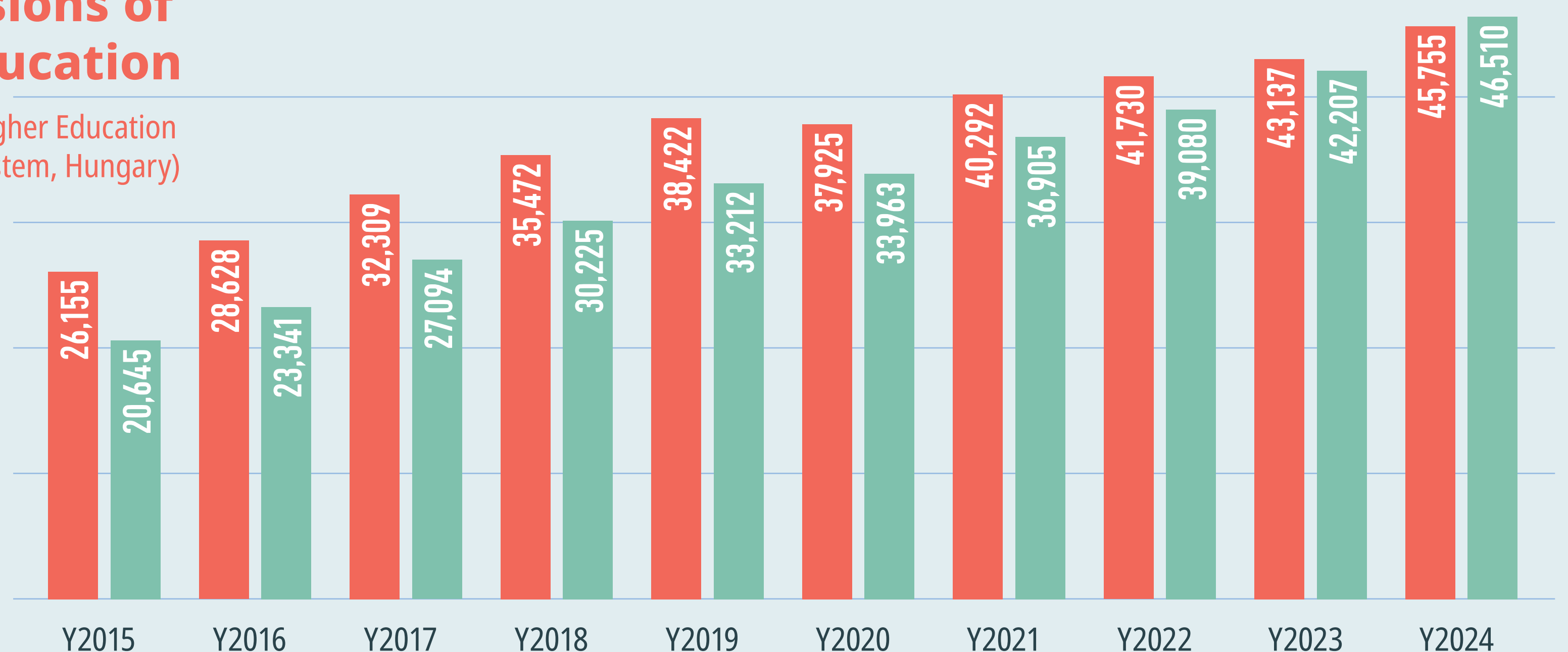- low explanatory power of individual-level factors

(Source: Erdei et al., 2024)

MACRO-LEVEL TRENDS

International dimensions of Hungarian Higher Education

International dimensions of Hungarian Higher Education
(Source: Higher Education Information System, Hungary)

Number of **international students**

Number of **all students** enrolled in **foreign-language-taught study programs**

Year	International students	All students (FL programs)
Y2015	26,155	20,645
Y2016	28,628	23,341
Y2017	32,309	27,094
Y2018	35,472	30,225
Y2019	38,422	33,212
Y2020	37,925	33,963
Y2021	40,292	36,905
Y2022	41,730	39,080
Y2023	43,137	42,207
Y2024	45,755	46,510

Number of HEIs: 63

Number of **all study programs: 2,450**

Number of **foreign-language-taught study programs** in the SH program: **722**

Number of **joint and double degree study programs: 36**
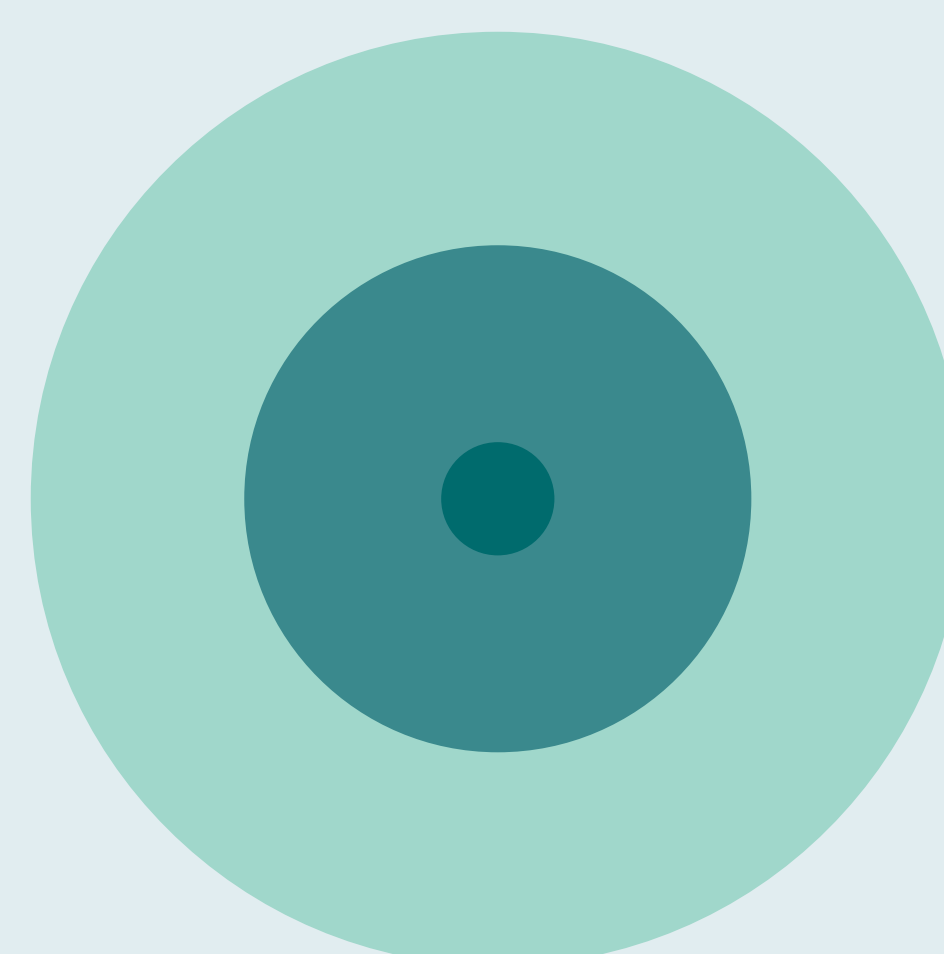
Erasmus+ credit mobility data (study+traineeship)

(Source: Tempus Public Foundation, Erasmus+ Statistics)

Academic Year

- Outgoing Students
- Incoming Students

Academic Year	Outgoing	Incoming
2014/15	4,421	5,408
2015/16	4,195	5,918
2016/17	4,341	6,242
2017/18	4,373	6,522
2021/22	8,752	
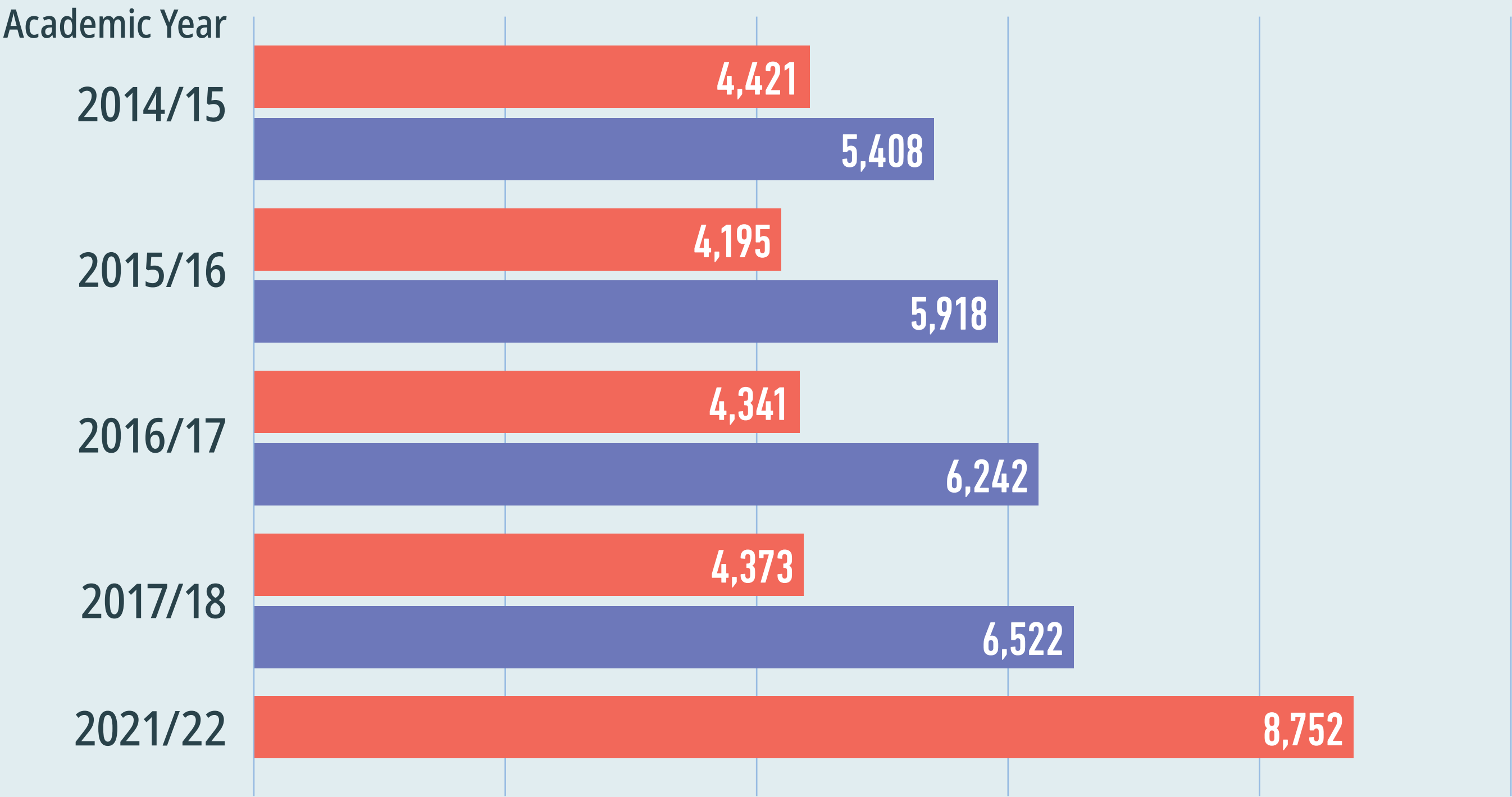
To what extent do you think your mental well-being is influenced by the...

(%, N=2,330, ASSIST-HU, 2024)

	Strong negative	Slightly negative	No impact	Slightly positive	Strong positive
climate and environmental change	20%	43%	21%	11%	5%
current military conflicts	17.4%	28%	48.9%	3.8%	1%
current economic environment	8%	35.4%	38.2%	13.6%	4.8%

- Strong negative
- Slightly negative
- No impact
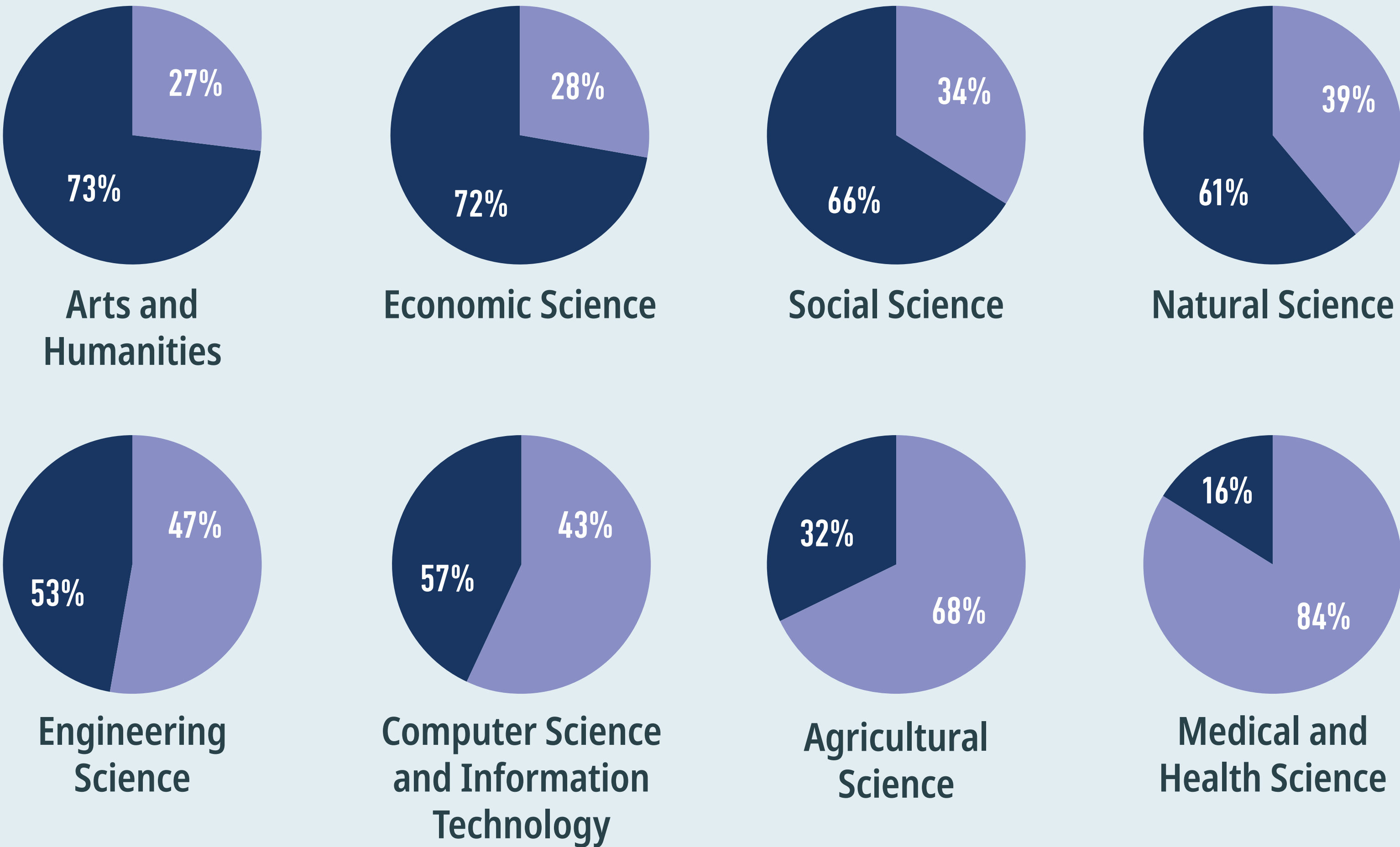- Slightly positive
- Strong positive
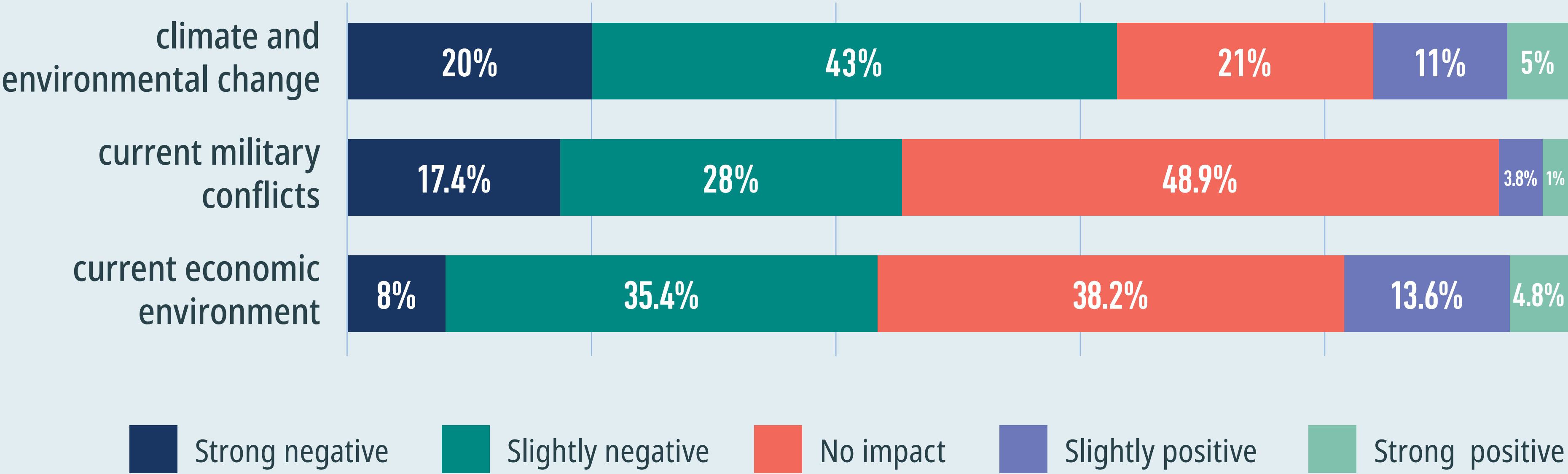
MESO-LEVEL (INSTITUTIONAL) FACTORS

Integration within the classroom by study fields

(N=705, p<0.001, SHTrack 2025)

- ONLY International Students
- BOTH Domestic and International Students

Arts and Humanities — 73% / 27%

Economic Science — 72% / 28%

Social Science — 66% / 34%

Natural Science — 61% / 39%

Engineering Science — 53% / 47%

Computer Science and Information Technology — 57% / 43%

Agricultural Science — 32% / 68%

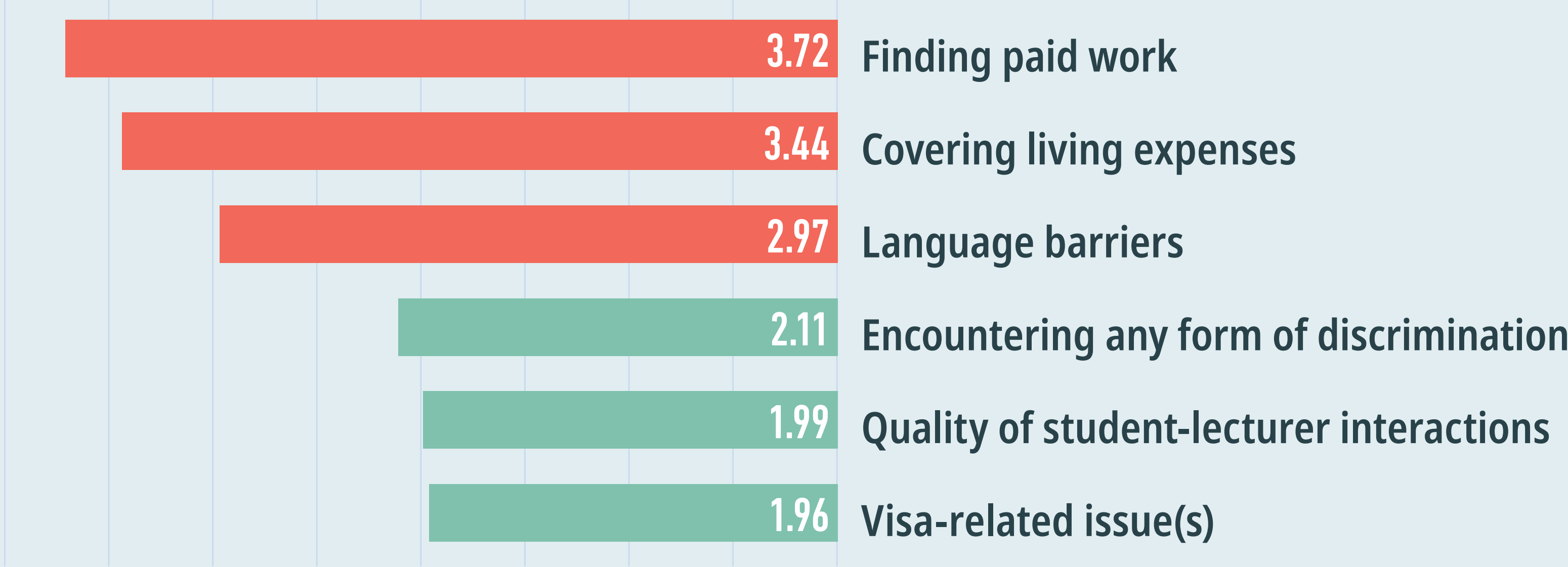**Medical and Health Science** — 16% / 84%
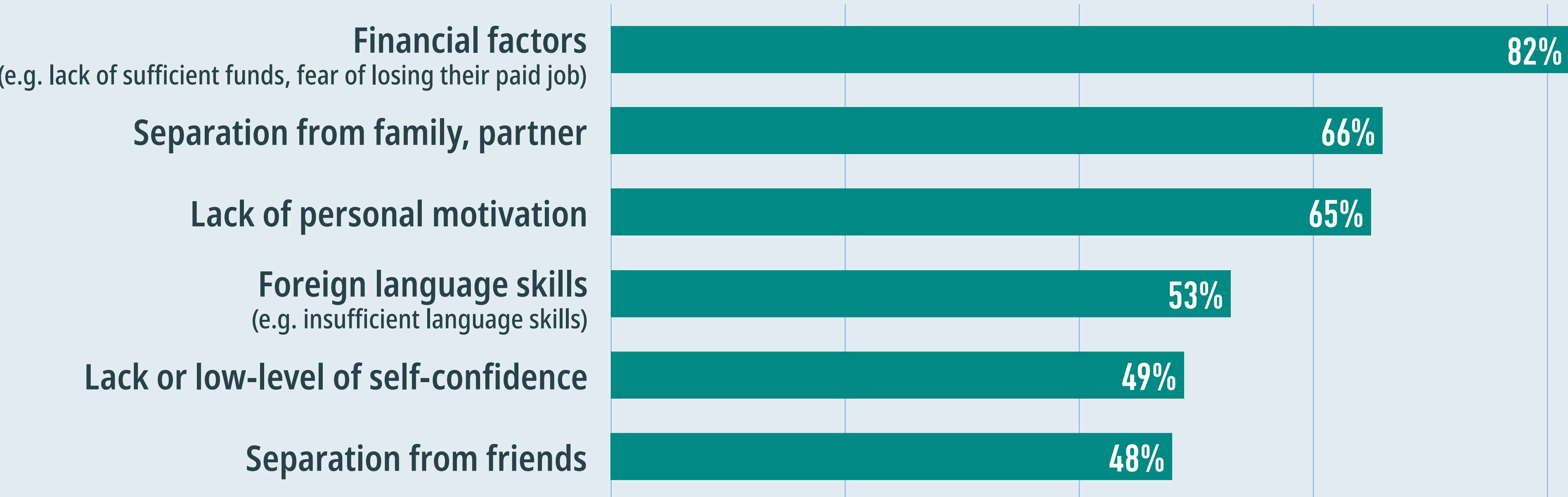
Find Study in Hungary at booth 409

MICRO-LEVEL (STUDENT-LEVEL) FACTORS

What were the factors that first-year international students perceived as the most and least challenging during their transition to university in Hungary?

(5-scale, N=705, SHTrack 2025)

Factor	Score
Finding paid work	3.72
Covering living expenses	3.44
Language barriers	2.97
Encountering any form of discrimination	2.11
Quality of student-lecturer interactions	1.99
Visa-related issue(s)	1.96

Student-level factors that discourage students from participating in outbound mobility

(Multiple question, Percent of cases, N=103, ErasmusGAP2024)

Factor	Percent
Financial factors (e.g. lack of sufficient funds, fear of losing their paid job)	82%
Separation from family, partner	66%
Lack of personal motivation	65%
Foreign language skills (e.g. insufficient language skills)	53%
Lack or low-level of self-confidence	49%
Separation from friends	48%

Advancing Inclusive Student Mobility: Key Institutional Strategies

Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Institutional Strategy for Student Mobility

MAIN FOCUS:
Institutional commitment, strategy design, and policy alignment.

• **Establish a clearly defined institutional strategy** on student mobility with explicit goals.

• **Integrate student mobility into the core academic strategy**, ensuring curriculum alignment (e.g., through mobility windows) and avoidance of academic delays.

• **Form a representative executive body** that oversees strategy implementation and includes stakeholders (students, staff, faculty).

• **Ensure mobility policies** explicitly address barriers for all students.

Strengthen Inclusive Communication and Engagement Practices

MAIN FOCUS:
Awareness, accessibility, and communication targeting underrepresented students.

• **Segment student communication** based on different needs and backgrounds to promote mobility opportunities effectively.

• **Promote mobility opportunities transparently** through multiple channels that are accessible to all students.

• **Embed mobility awareness early in academic programs** to increase student preparedness and motivation.

• **Train academic and administrative staff** to promote and support inclusive mobility as part of their role.

Enhance Student-Centered Mobility Support and Preparation

MAIN FOCUS:
Academic, administrative, and intercultural preparation for all stages of the mobility experience.

• **Provide comprehensive support services** from the initial decision-making phase to post-mobility reintegration.

• **Offer tailored academic and intercultural preparation**, especially for students with fewer opportunities.

• **Regularly evaluate and update** academic and administrative preparation programs to address changing student needs.

• **Ensure inclusive selection criteria** that balance merit and diversity, minimizing barriers to participation.

Expand and Improve Accessible Financial Support Systems

MAIN FOCUS:
Financial inclusivity and reduction of cost-related mobility barriers.

• **Identify and address key financial obstacles**, including employment loss or disability-related costs.

• **Provide targeted grants and support mechanisms** (e.g., top-up grants, inclusion support) for underrepresented groups.

• **Maintain transparent and easy-to-navigate financial aid processes** to encourage applications from all student demographics.

• **Monitor financial data and trends** regularly (from surveys and institutional feedback) to guide funding strategy.

RESOURCES:
• ASSIST-HU, 2024. Research on all international students studying in Hungary – in collaboration with Higher Education Counselling Association (online questionnaire, N=2330)
• Erasmus+ GAP, 2024. Research on university staff members on gap between mobile and non-mobile students (online questionnaire, N=103)
• Erdei, L.A., Kasza, G., Szulovszky, M., Laczik, D & Dorner, H. (2024). Erasmus GAP – Understanding and Addressing the Mobility Gap in Higher Education. Desk Research Report.
  www.erasmusgap.uvsq.fr/research-results
• SHTrack2025. Survey on first-year international degree-seeking students' mental well-being, 2025 (online questionnaire, N=705)
• Statistics: Tempus Public Foundation, Erasmus+ Statistics, Higher Education Information System, Hungary