

Exploring MENTAL WELL-BEING

of First-year International Students

Mental well-being helps international students navigate uncertainty throughout their studies. For first-year students, maintaining well-being shapes how successfully they adjust to a new setting. This poster presents empirical findings on the factors that influence their adjustment, academic journey, and overall well-being.

Mental health, mental and physical well-being is crucial for academic success

- The number of international students is **growing in Hungary**.
- The pandemic highlighted existing well-being **challenges**.
- OECD (2025) identifies mental well-being as a **key educational concern**.

Domestic and international tertiary students show similar mental health outcomes (Xieng et al., 2024)

- **High levels** of anxiety, depression, and psychological distress are reported in both groups.
- International students' mental health **can be influenced** by multiple academic, social, and cultural factors.
- Studies estimate that **20%–50% of international students experience mental health challenges** (Xieng et al., 2024).

25%

mental health problems
(ASSIST-HU, 2024)

31%

anxiety
(ASSIST-HU, 2024)

15%

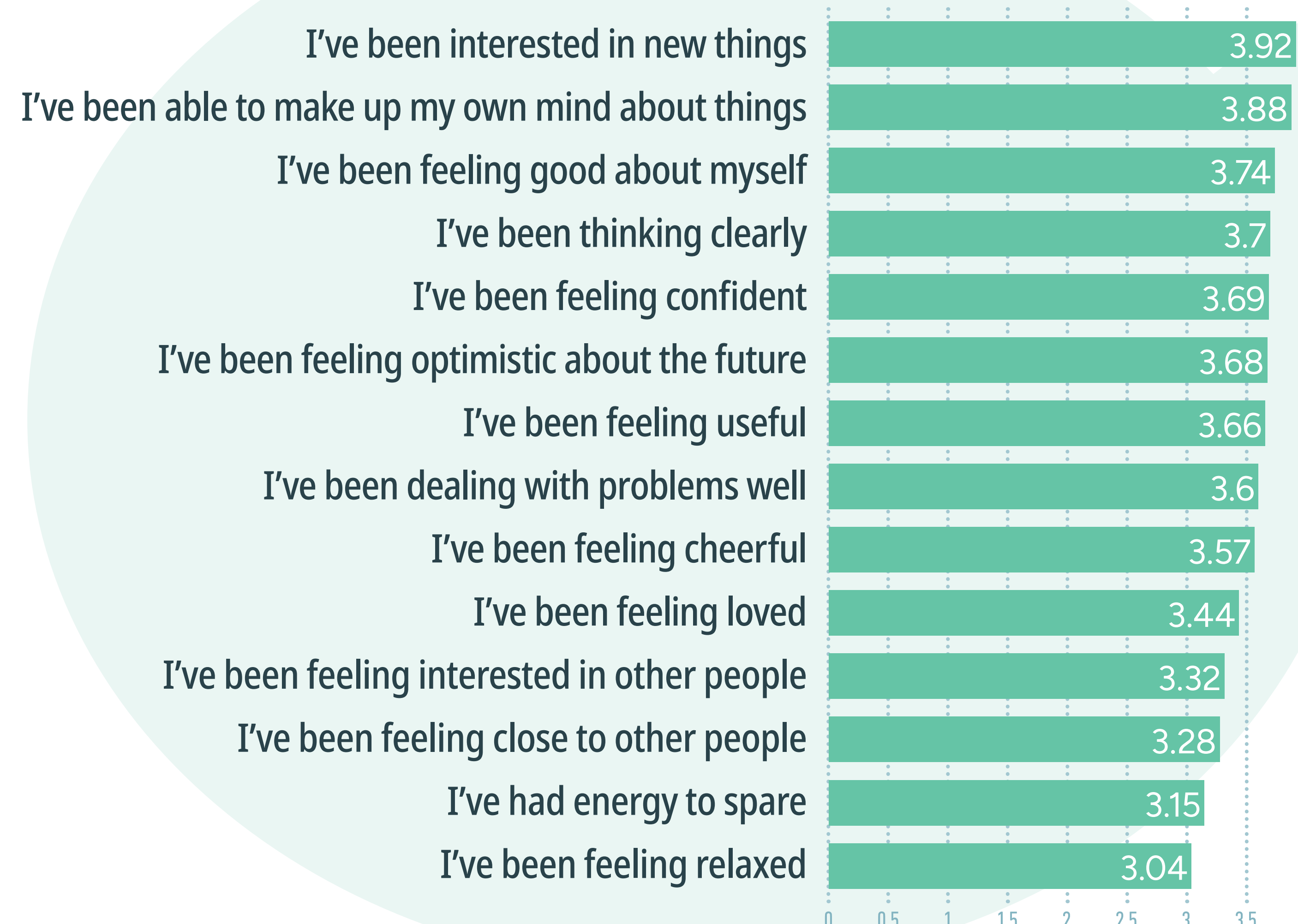
low mental well-being among first-year students
(SHTrack, 2025)



Overall Well-being Profile According to the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007)

Mental well-being was measured using the 14-item Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), with items rated on a 1–5 Likert scale (“None of the time” – “All of the time”).

Sample size: N=705.



The **mean scores for items range between approximately 3.0 and 3.9**, suggesting that participants report a **moderate to good level of positive mental states** (e.g., optimism, feeling useful, energy).



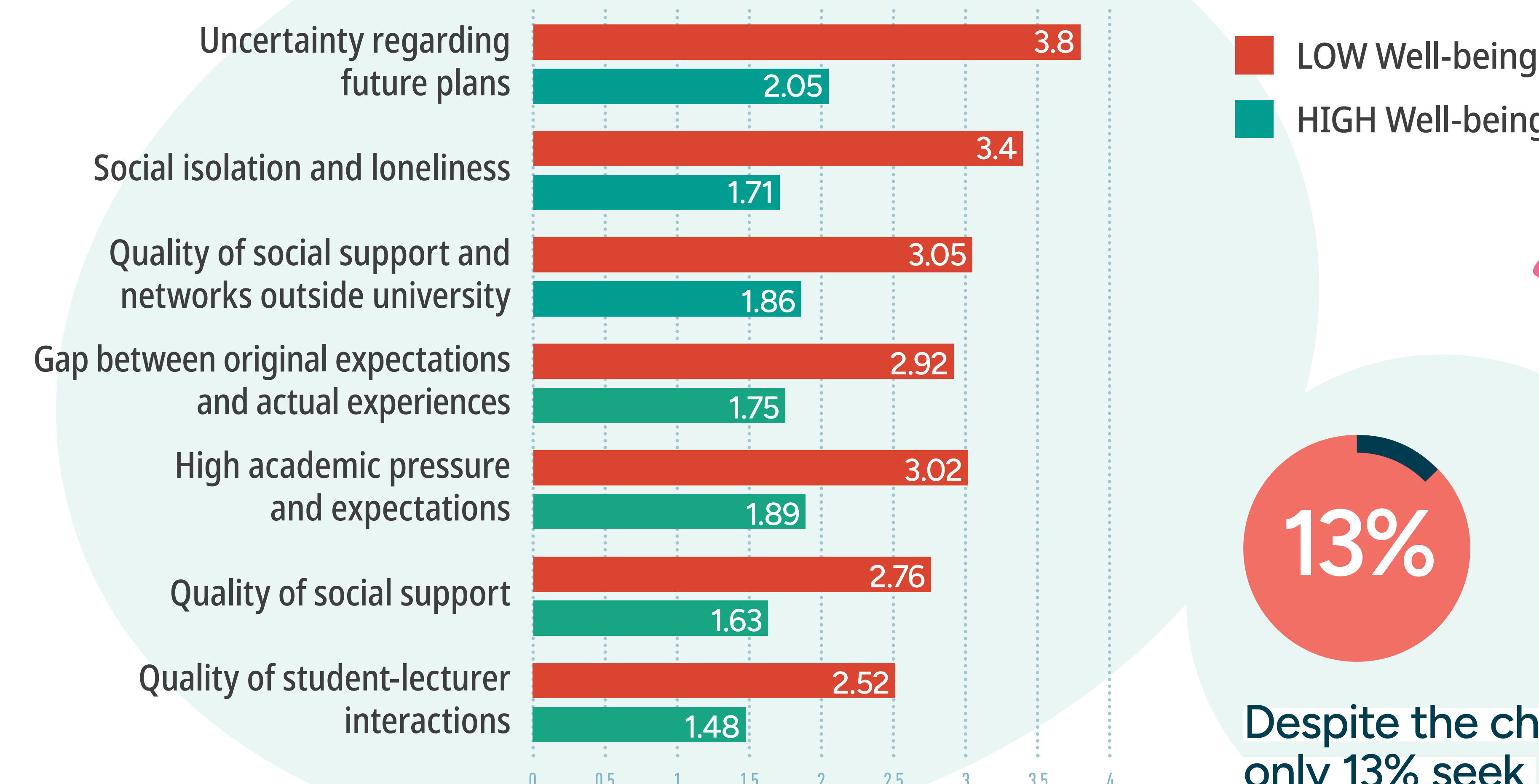
Key stressors for first-year international students:

financial concerns

uncertainty regarding future plans

social support/network at their university

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent have the following factors caused you difficulties as an IS in Hungary? (n=705, p 0.001, SHTrack, 2025)

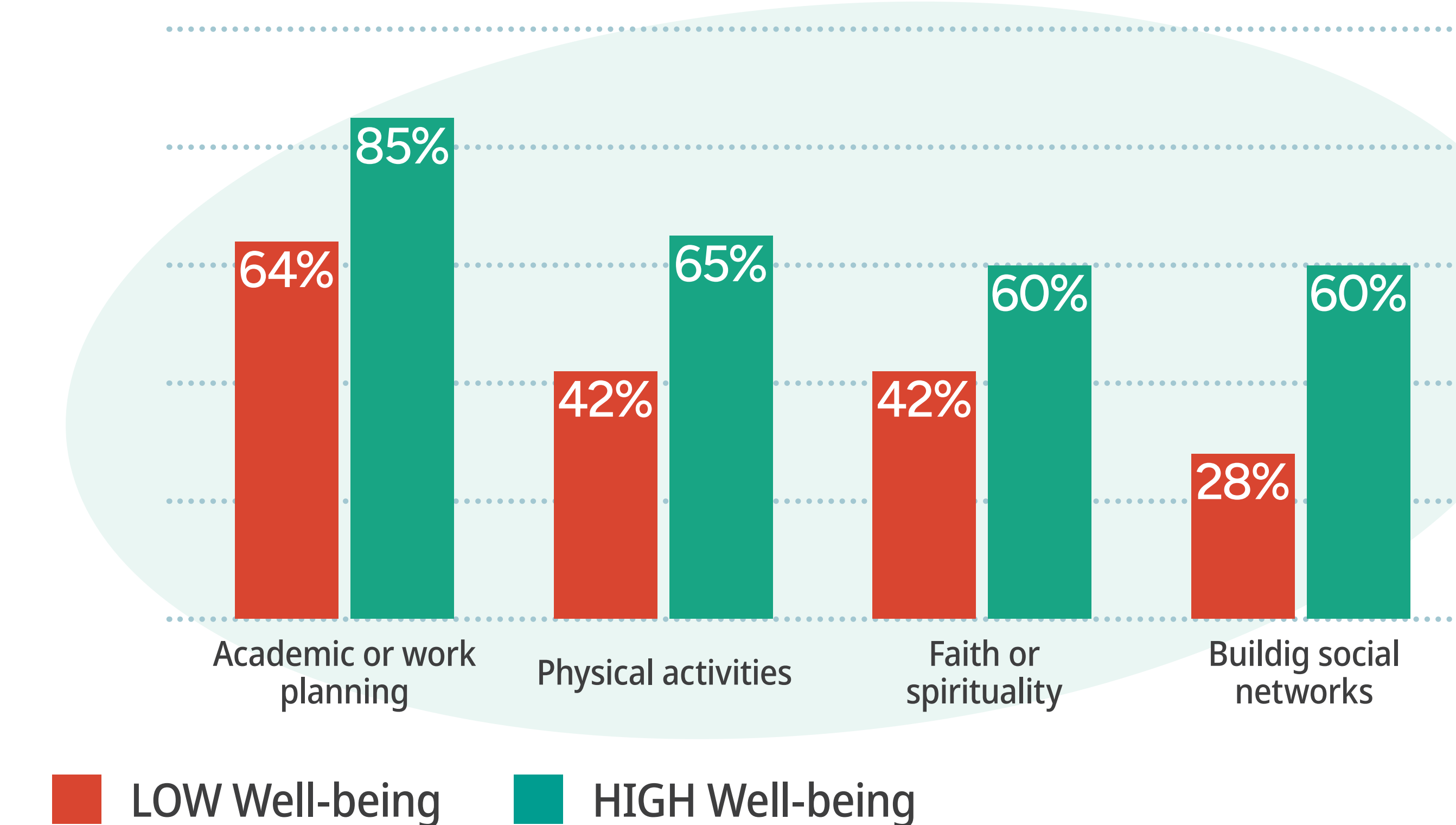


13%

Despite the challenges, only 13% seek professional help.



What strategies do you most frequently use to manage various challenges in your daily life? (n=705, p 0.001, SHTrack, 2025)



Adaptive and Maladaptive Coping Strategies

Adaptive Coping Strategies

Academic or work planning

Leisure activities



Physical activities

Faith or spirituality

SHTrack, 2025

Maladaptive Coping Strategies

Increased use of social media

Emotional or stress related eating



Consumption of alcohol

Engagement in online gaming

ASSIST-HU, 2024

Recommendations for Universities

Overall, students' recommendations highlight the importance of a holistic approach to well-being.

Universities should combine:

Stronger social integration

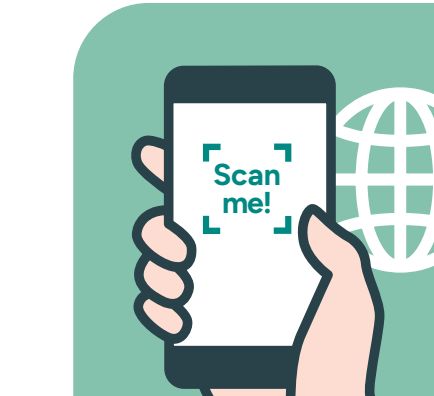
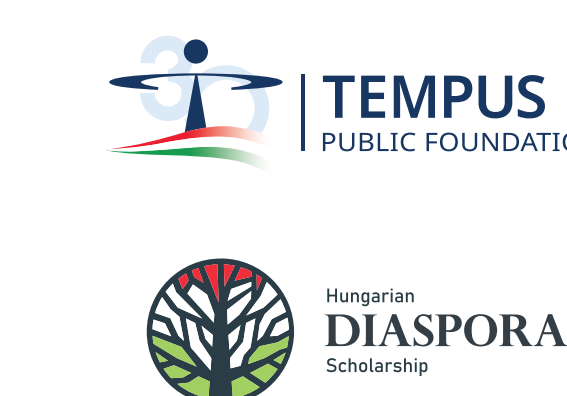
Affordable sports and wellness opportunities

Accessible mental health services

Balanced academic expectations

Financial support mechanisms

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