wiegETHs - Intermediate Report

AG Chancengleichheit, a group consisting of members from VSETH and AVETH

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The 2024 wiegETHs survey assesses the well-being, diversity, and study and working conditions of students and mid-level academic staff at ETH Zurich. The survey was conducted by VSETH and AVETH, with the support of ETH, and builds on the 2019 wiegETHs edition, expanding its scope to include mid-level academic staff for a broader perspective and capturing changes over the past five years. With a strong response rate of 40.8% (10,823 responses), the survey provides valuable insights into key areas such as mental health, study and work environments, discrimination, and inclusivity.

The survey data reveals that 74% of students described their mental health positively, though particular groups, including trans, non-binary, and cis female individuals, as well as those with disabilities and non-heterosexual identities, reported lower well-being. Among mid-level academic staff, doctoral students indicated lower mental health scores than other roles. The findings also show a reduction in awareness of support services since 2019. Additionally, 27% of respondents experienced and 29% witnessed discomfort, discrimination, or inappropriate behavior (DDI).

These preliminary results serve as a foundation for further analysis and targeted action to improve well-being, equity, and inclusivity at ETH. Future iterations of the survey will ensure continued monitoring and long-term institutional improvements.

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Glossary

(Mid-level) academic staff All doctoral students, postdoctoral scientists, established researchers ("Oberassistent:in"), scientific assistants, senior scientists, scientific collaborators, and executive scientific collaborators.

AVETH AVETH is the academic association of the mid-level academic staff at ETH Zurich.

BSc This describes all students enrolled in a Bachelor's programme at ETH Zurich at the time of the survey.

DDI Discomfort, Discrimination and Inappropriate behaviour.

Est. researcher Established Researcher: Official ETH translation of "Oberassistent:in".

LGBTQ+ An acronym used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning persons or the community.

MmEB Master mit ETH Zurich Bachelor. This refers to students pursuing a Master's degree at ETH Zurich that have also completed a Bachelor's degree at ETH Zurich.

MoEB Master ohne ETH Zurich Bachelor. This refers to students pursuing a Master's degree at ETH Zurich that have not completed a Bachelor's degree at ETH Zurich.

MSc This describes all students enrolled in a Master's programme at ETH Zurich at the time of the survey.

PBS Psychologische Beratungsstelle (English: Psychological counselling centre) is a contact point of ETH Zurich.

PhD This describes all doctoral students, colloquially shortened as 'PhDs'. In this report they are **not** understood as students.

SGU Abteilung für Sicherheit, Gesundheit und Umwelt (English: Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) department) is a contact point of ETH Zurich.

STEM Educational classification for lectures in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Student Refers to all Bachelors, Masters, Mobility and other students, specifically excluding doctoral students.

VSETH VSETH is the umbrella organisation of all students at ETH Zurich.

1 The Project

The 2024 wiegETHs survey examines the well-being, study and working conditions, and diversity of students and mid-level academic staff at ETH Zurich. This first report, prepared by AVETH and VSETH representatives, presents preliminary findings for transparency. It is not a comprehensive analysis but will be followed by further reports, which will be generated in collaboration with ETH bodies, student organisations, and mid-level academic staff to better understand different groups' experiences and identify areas for improvement.

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1.1 Motivation

VSETH and AVETH aim to promote mental well-being and ensure the best possible study and working conditions for students and mid-level academic staff at ETH. For an evidence-based approach to representation, AVETH and VSETH, with support from ETH, conducted an anonymous survey in the spring semester of 2024. The survey explores various aspects of university culture to identify areas for improvement and collective action. The first *wiegETHs* survey, launched by VSETH in 2019, led to positive changes at ETH. Now, after five years and a pandemic, VSETH in collaboration with AVETH, relaunched the survey and expanded it to include mid-level academic staff for an updated, broader perspective.

1.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire builds on the 2019 *wiegETHs* survey to ensure comparability across sectors. Its broad scope captures diverse perspectives, prevents overrepresentation, and provides a comprehensive view of the situation at ETH, reducing the need for multiple surveys. The topics covered include:

- Mental Health
- Knowledge and Trust in Contact Points
- Study and Working Conditions
- Discomfort, Discrimination and Inappropriate behaviour (DDI)
- Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

The questionnaire was designed and reviewed by AVETH, VSETH, and ETH minority representatives. The project team consisted of several AVETH and VSETH members with expertise in sociology, psychology, statistical analysis and diversity. The final version was reviewed and finalised by gfs-zürich[1].

1.3 Realisation of the survey

The survey ran for 34 days from 10 April to 14 May 2024. Personalised URLs were emailed to all students and mid-level academic staff at ETH, allowing one response per person. Those who had not yet completed the survey after two weeks were sent a reminder email by gfs-zürich. The rectorate announced the survey in advance and encouraged participation. Throughout the survey period, VSETH, its study associations and connected associations, AVETH and its departmental associations, and central ETH units together with the departments, promoted the survey intensively through lectures, promotional events, email lists, posters, stickers, digital platforms, and social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp). In the final week, the promotion focused on courses and departments with a lower response rate. In total, more than 150 associations, initiatives, and institutions at ETH supported the distribution of the survey. The total response rate was 40.8% which equals to a total of 10’823 responses.

1.4 Evaluation

gfs-zürich carried out the primary data analysis and provided VSETH and AVETH with processed data in the form of tables. Incomplete surveys were excluded from the dataset. gfs-zürich categorised response data into groups to allow for pairwise comparison between different subsets in consultation with VSETH and AVETH. The grouping aimed to strike a balance, ensuring that the groups were both large enough to be statistically meaningful, but also fine-grained enough to allow for detailed analysis. Unless stated otherwise, significance was assessed using a weighted t-test with multiple testing correction at a 0.05 significance level. Results are supplemented by descriptive mean comparisons. The term "significant" is used only for statistically tested and confirmed differences. In addition, we explicitly exclude departmental results from this report as far as possible, as this report is intended to give an overall impression of ETH. Departmental results are only included if they are important for understanding the overall situation at ETH. In accordance with data protection regulations, AVETH and VSETH did not receive any raw data that could identify individuals.

2 Findings

2.1 Demographics

This section describes the general demographic characteristics of our survey sample to contextu-

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alise the subsequent results. For an overview of the demographic data analysed, see the questionnaire template [2].

2.1.1 Institutional role

The distribution of the responses based on the respondents' main role at ETH is shown in Figure 1. In general, the distribution of institutional role, study field, department membership, gender, and age show a similar distribution to the overall population of students and mid-level academic staff at ETH [3]. 50% of the student participants spent between 2 and 4 years at ETH, while about 30% spent a year or less and 20% more than 4 years (data not shown).

2.1.2 Age distribution

The overall age distribution of the survey participants is shown in Figure 2. 60% of the participants were younger than 25 years old. 52% of doctoral students were 27-30 years old, and 18% were over 30 years old (data not shown).

2.1.3 Gender and sexual orientation

Figure 3 shows the gender distribution per role. The results indicate a higher proportion of cis males at ETH compared to the broader Swiss university average, but is comparable to other STEM-focused universities [4, 5]. Gender distribution correlates with role, with a decreasing proportion of non cis males in senior roles, where cis males make up 78% of the senior scientists (Figure 6). This trend exemplifies the 'leaky pipeline', a known concern in STEM academia and at ETH [6]. 83% of the survey participants identified as heterosexual, 7% as bisexual, 3% as gay/lesbian, 3% as unsure, 1% as pansexual, 1% as asexual, 1% identified as other, and 3% did not answer (multiple responses were possible, data not shown).

2.1.4 Geographical background

Overall, the majority of participants spent most of their lives Switzerland (Figure 4). Notably, there is a significant difference between MmEB and MoEB at the Masters level, with 80% of MmEB students compared to only 23% of MoEB students having spent most of their lives in Switzerland (data not shown). For mid-level academic staff, a lower percentage of respondents' geographical background lies in the German-speaking part of Switzerland (e.g. 27% of doctoral students and 12% of postdoctoral scientists). Still, the majority of respondents have a Swiss or Western European background.

2.1.5 Educational background

The vast majority (73%) of participants have at least one parent or guardian with a bachelor, master, diploma or doctorate from a higher education institution (Figure 5) [7]. Overall, 27% of the participants identified themselves as so-called first-generation students or academics (those with both parents or guardians without a tertiary degree). For students, the proportion of first-generation students at ETH is 26%, which is below the Swiss university average of 44% [8]. Within first-generation students and academics at ETH, there are significantly fewer first-generation students and academics that are not from Switzerland (data not shown).

2.1.6 Disabilities

Respondents were asked to self-describe their disabilities. The majority indicated that none of the listed options applied to them, while 22% selected at least one (multiple responses possible; data not shown). The reported disabilities included: 6% AD(H)D, 6% other conditions such as chronic illnesses or psychological disorders, 5% visual impairment, 3% dyslexia or dyscalculia, 2% autism spectrum disorder, and less than 1% hearing, speech, or mobility impairments.

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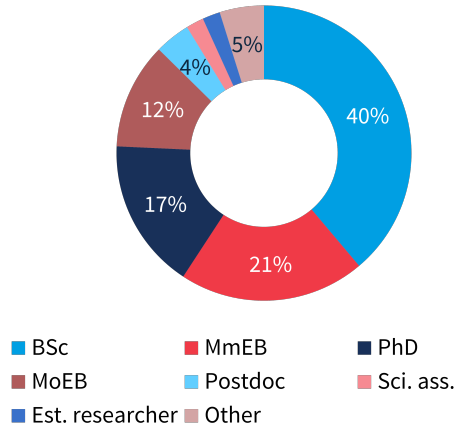

Figure 1: *The distribution of the participants' institutional roles at ETH.*

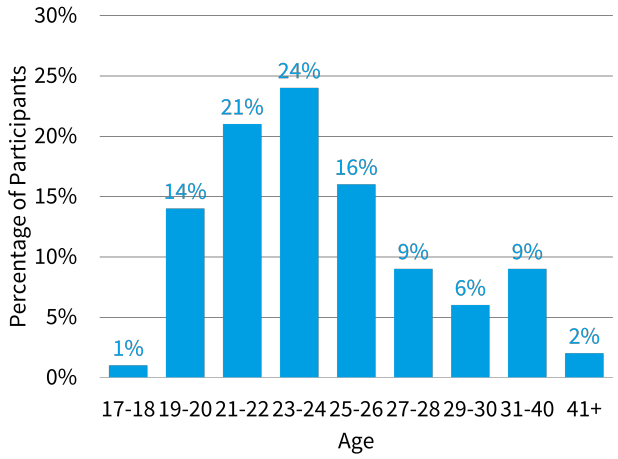

Figure 2: *Age bracket distribution of all participants.*

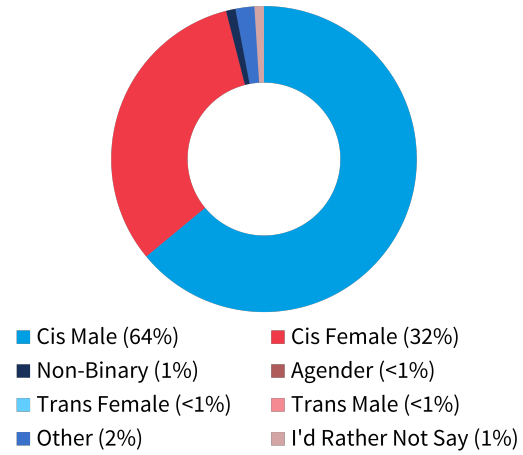

Figure 3: *Gender identity distribution of all participants.*

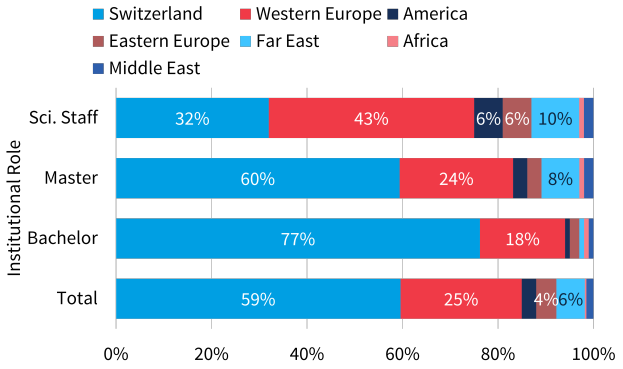

Figure 4: *The geographical background, defined as the region in which the majority of respondents' lifetime was spent, in relation to their institutional role at ETH. The respondents' answers were grouped for easier visibility. For example, the replies German, French, Italian and Rumantsch speaking Switzerland were combined to the grouping Switzerland.*

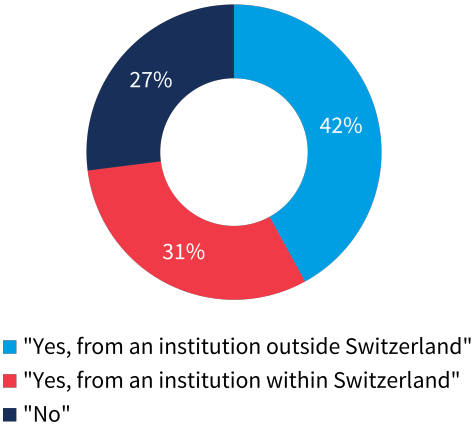

Figure 5: *Academic background of the participants' parents or legal guardians. The participants replied to the question: "Does at least one of your legal guardians have a higher education diploma?"*

2.2 Mental Health

2.2.1 Students

Students were asked to assess their mental state on a 7-point scale ranging from "very bad" to "very good", with additional options for "fluctuating" or "no answer". This self-assessed mental health state can be used to identify groups that are at increased risk of mental health problems [9]. Overall, 74% of students reported their mental state as "rather good" to "very

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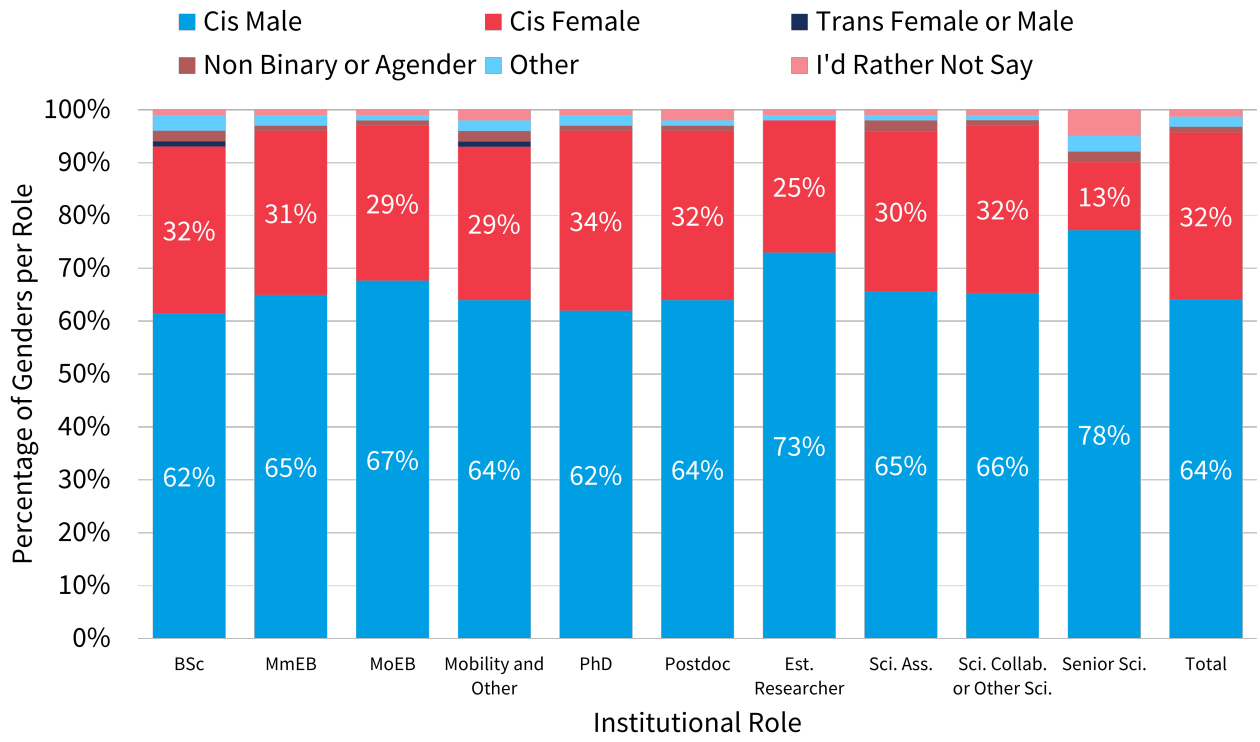

Figure 6: *Gender distribution per institutional role.*

good," with 13% rating it as "very good." 14% rated their mental state as "rather bad" to "very bad", with only 1% (114) describing it as "very bad". Compared to 2019, we see a small decrease in the overall mental state of students (Figure 7). When assessing mental state in relation to gender identity, trans male or trans female and non-binary or agender individuals report significantly worse mental health compared to other groups (Figure 9). Furthermore, significantly less females than males rate their mental health positively ("rather good", "good", or "very good"). Individuals with disabilities rate their mental health considerably worse than people without a disability (Figure 8). Additionally, heterosexual individuals evaluate their mental state significantly better than all other groups (Figure 10).

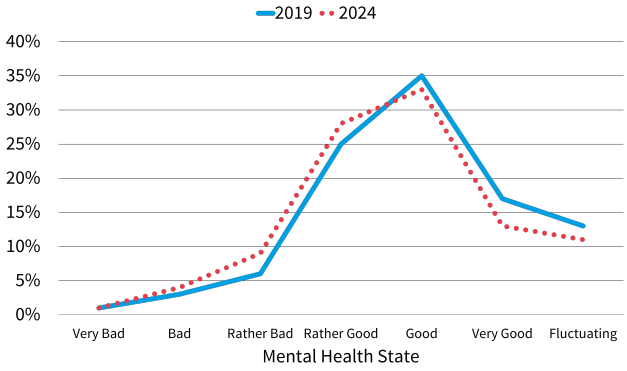

Figure 7: *Students' reported mental health state compared between the 2019 and 2024 wiegETHs surveys.*

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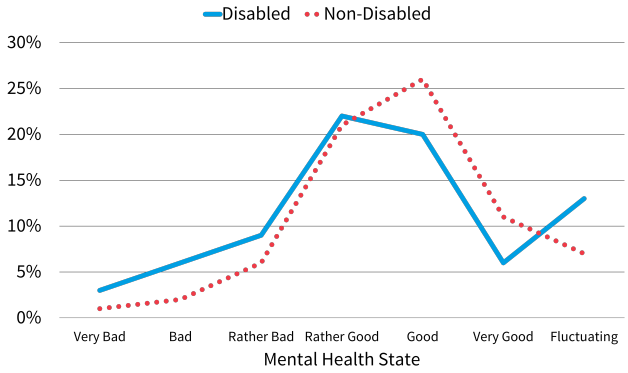

Figure 8: *Mental health state of those participants that have reported a disability.*

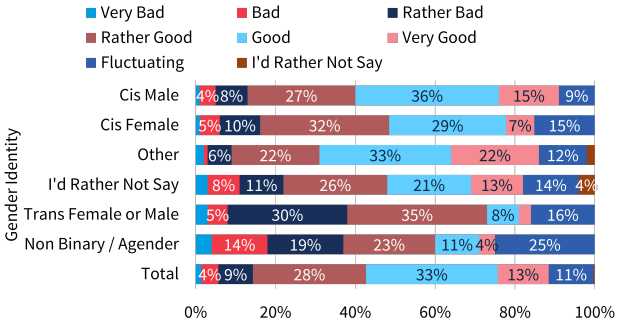

Figure 9: *Mental health state in relation to gender identity of the participants.*

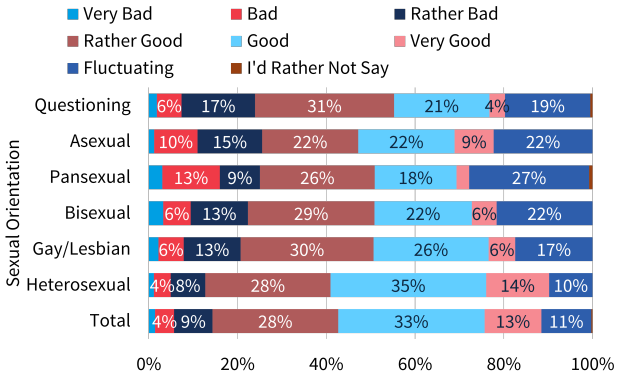

Figure 10: *Mental health state in relation to the sexual orientation of participants.*

Symptoms To mimic the analysis from 2019, symptoms of poor mental health experienced for a period longer than 2 weeks were analysed only among students who rated their mental health as "fluctuating", “rather good”, “rather bad”, “bad”, or “very bad” (Figure 11). The data shows a variety of symptoms, with a lack of interest or enjoyment in activities (66%), feeling tense (65%), and problems with sleep (60%) among the most widely reported symptoms. Less prevalent symptoms include suicidal thoughts (10%) and self-harm (3%). Between 2019 and 2024, there has been a noticeable increase in the prevalence of most reported symptoms among this group. The greatest increase was in “overwhelming avoidance or fear of certain social situations”, jumping from 24% in 2019 to 40% in 2024. Anxiety or panic attacks also became more common, increasing from 17% to 26%.

There are no considerable differences in these symptoms across age groups, with all ages reporting similar experiences. However, when comparing reports of symptoms based on gender identity or sexual orientation, there is generally a difference of at least 10%, with cis males and heterosexual individuals reporting fewer symptoms compared to other groups (data not shown).

When grouped by overall mental well-being, we can see a progressive number of symptoms reported with worse mental well being (see Table 1). However, some symptoms are generally experienced also by individuals who rate their mental health positively. This effect has previously been observed in other studies [10].

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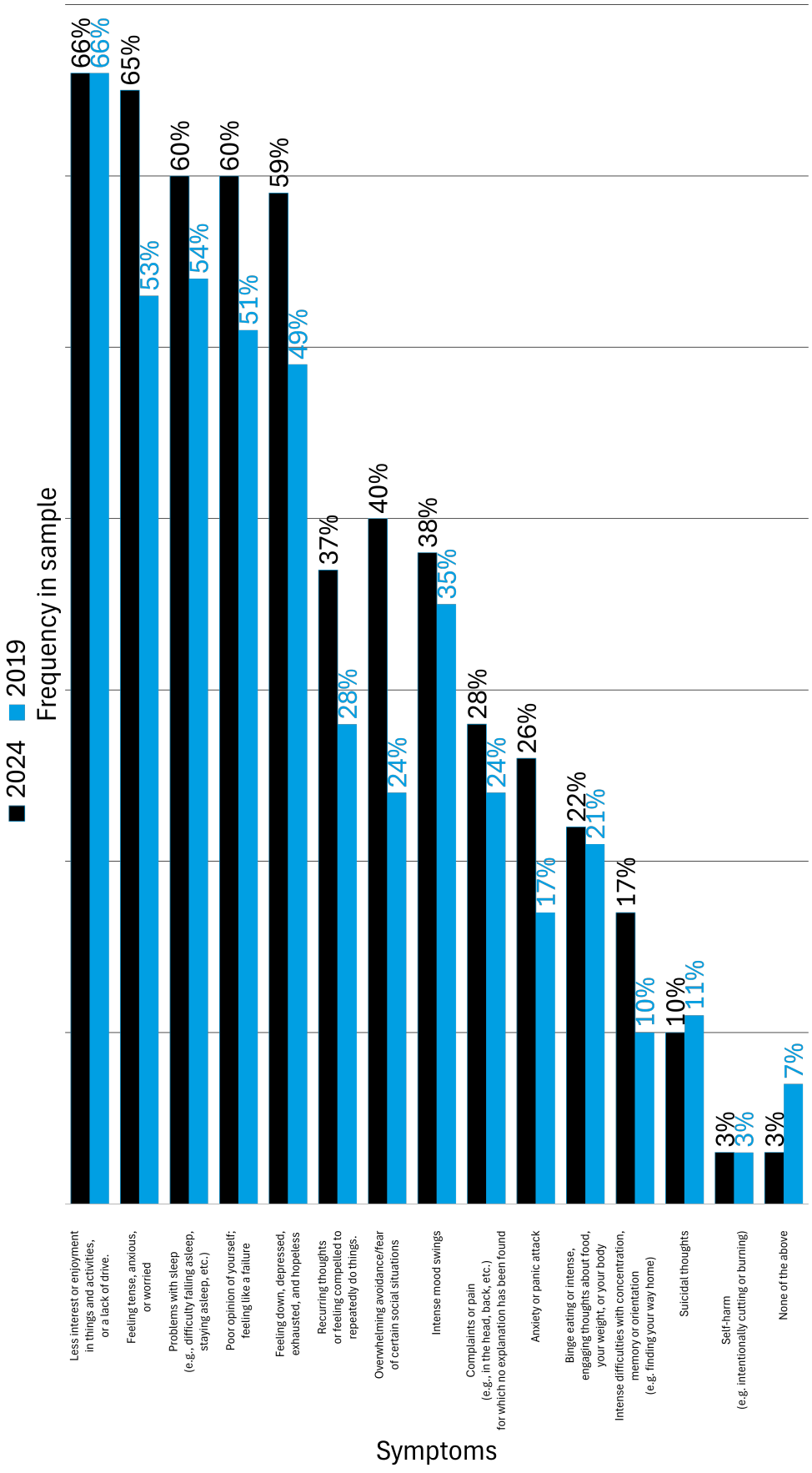

Figure 11: *Comparison between the 2019 and 2024 survey results respecting symptoms of poor mental health of respondents with "rather good" to "very bad" or fluctuating mental health state.*

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Mental state	Very bad	Bad	Rather bad	Rather good	Good	Very good	Fluctuating
Average # of symptoms	9.3	8.3	6.5	4.1	2.5	1.7	6.1

Table 1: *Average number of symptoms in relation to mental state.*

2.2.2 Mid-level Academic Staff

The general well-being of participants was assessed through the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-5) [11, 12, 13]. The raw data for this scale was transformed and analysed based on the MHI-5 manual [14]. The scores can be interpreted as follows: A score of 100 reflects minimal psychological distress, indicating excellent well-being and a very low risk of developing psychological problems. Conversely, a score of 0 signifies severe psychological distress, suggesting poor well-being and a high risk of psychological issues. A score of 60 represents a critical threshold for this scale. In general, a score under 60 indicates moderate psychological distress, which poses a concerning risk for the development of psychological problems such as sleep disorders, depression and/or anxiety disorder over time. In total, 2 873 participants from the mid-level academic staff filled out the scale, with a mean score of 63.6 and a standard deviation of 20 (minimum 0; maximum 100; median 68). Respondents above 40 years of age and heterosexual respondents have significantly higher scores than other groups (data not shown), and cis females have significantly lower scores than cis males (Figure 12). Postdocs, scientific collaborators and senior scientists display significantly higher scores compared to doctoral students (Figure 13). The mean score of 61.6 (SD = 20) for doctoral students is on average 5 to 10 points lower than the one of other ETH roles. There is also a moderate, significant variance between departments (data not shown).

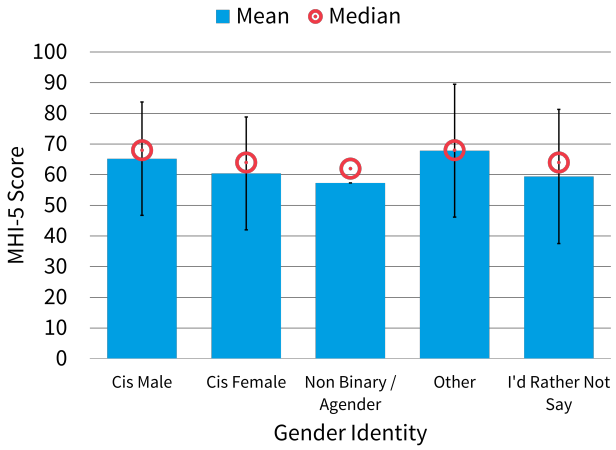

Figure 12: *Mid-level academic staff's MHI-5 scores per gender identity.*

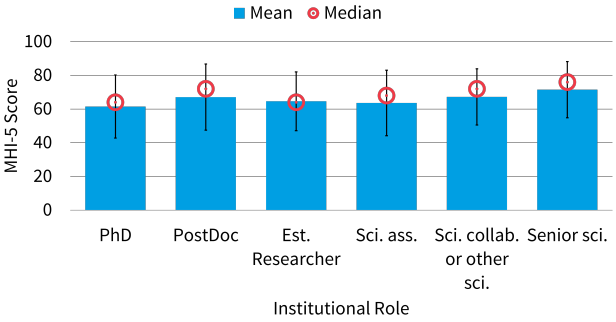

Figure 13: *Mid-level academic staff MHI-5 scores per institutional role.*

2.3 Knowledge and Trust in Contact Points

This section examines trust in and awareness of ETH support services among students and mid-level academic staff. Awareness and trust vary by age, gender identity, mental well-being, and institutional role.

2.3.1 Awareness of Services

Respondents have been asked to indicate their awareness of available mental health services (Figure 15). The best known service among all students was Nightline[15], regardless of the partic-

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ipants' mental well-being status. The awareness of other services, such as PBS[16] and ETH Respekt[17], varied. Students' awareness and knowledge of the available contact points has decreased since 2019 across all services analysed in both surveys (Figure14).

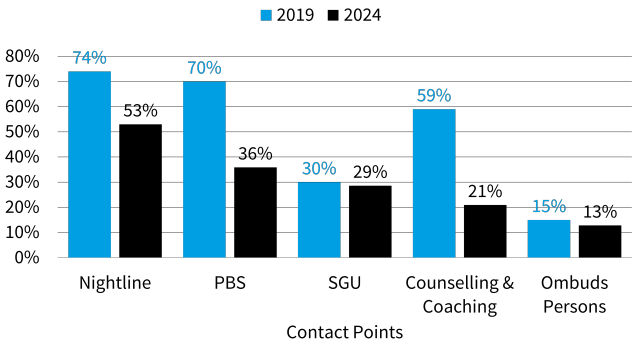

Figure 14: *Comparison of participants' knowledge of contact points between the 2019 and the 2024 wiegETHs surveys.*

2.3.2 Use of Services

Most participants have not previously contacted any of the available services (Figure 15). PBS is the most frequently used service, especially by participants aged 25-30, while Student Services' Counselling and Coaching is more common among younger participants. Non-binary, cis female, and agender participants are more likely to contact the available services, while cis males are least likely to do so. Mental well-being significantly correlates with service use, with those struggling the most reaching out more frequently (data not shown).

Non-users' trust in services known to them Overall, the trust in contact points was rated positively by non-users (defined as people who did not report service usage, Figure 16). Counselling and Coaching and PBS were perceived as the most trustworthy services, particularly among cis males and those with good mental health (data not shown).

Users' evaluation of contact points Generally, users perceived almost all contact points as useful (with a rating of at least 4, Figure 16). ETH Respekt received the lowest rating, with an average of 3.9. The most useful services were reported to be VSETH Student Helpdesk (5.5) and HR contact person (5.4), respectively.

2.4 Study and Working Conditions

2.4.1 Students

This section examines students' perceptions of support, enjoyment, and meaning in their studies. Responses were collected using a seven-point Likert scale and cover study conditions, lecture attendance, study prolongation, and external work. Differences were observed based on age, mental health, and study field. Students generally feel well supported by their peers (Figure 17), though this varies by program. MoEB students report the lowest peer support (16% feeling unsupported vs. 4% for MmEB). Smaller programs tend to show stronger peer support (data not shown). Mental health also plays a role, with lower peer support linked to poorer well-being (Figure 18).

Study Experience and Satisfaction Students are generally positive about ETH, with a recommendation score of 5.5 in both 2019 and 2024. Perceived academic freedom has improved (5.1 in 2024 vs. 4.4 in 2019), particularly in programs with regulatory changes (data not shown). The workload is considered stable (4.4 in both years), and satisfaction with free time has improved slightly (4.0 vs. 3.7 in 2019). Most students manage study pressure well (mean = 4.8), though cis men report handling it significantly better than cis women, trans, and non-binary students (data not shown). Students rate ETH as a motivating and supportive environment (mean = 4.6 vs. 4.7 in 2019), but this perception declines with time spent at ETH. Those at ETH for under two years feel the most motivated (data not shown). Overall, students find more joy and meaning in their studies compared to 2019 (Figure 19).

Speaking Up and Accessibility Over 50% of students (mean = 5.3) feel comfortable expressing displeasure in harassing situations, but cis women, non-binary, and non-heterosexual students report

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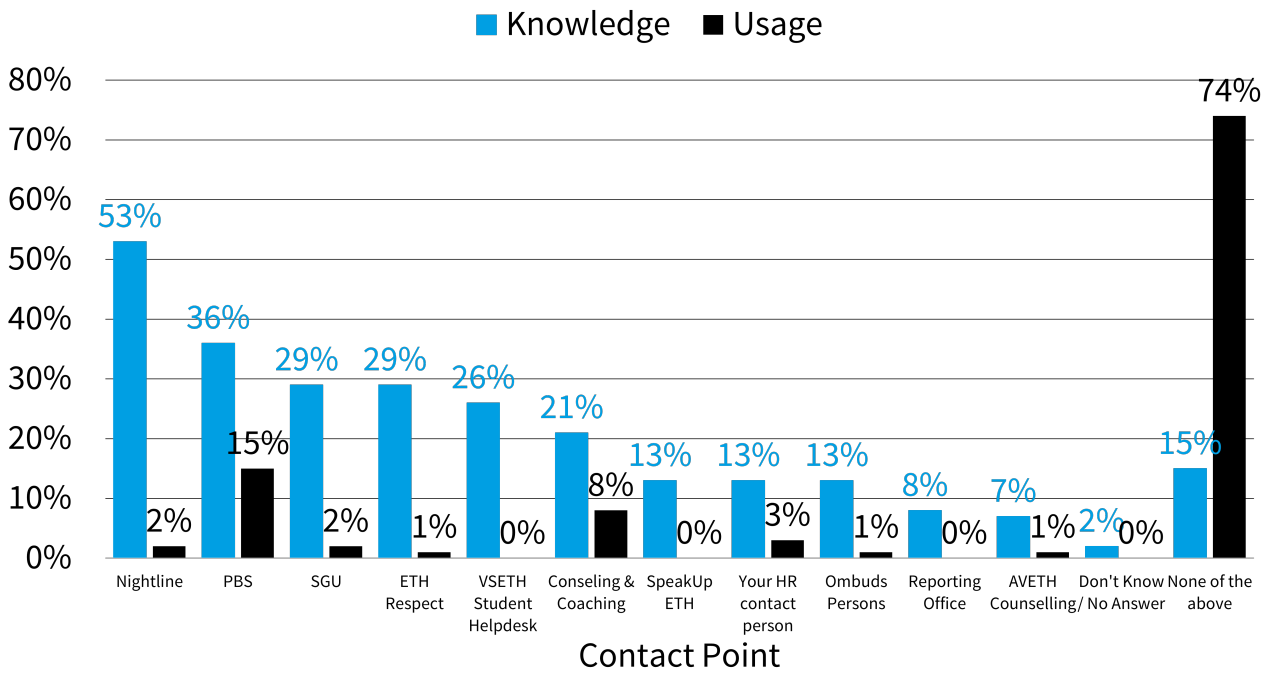

Figure 15: *Participants' knowledge of available contact points compared to their usage.*

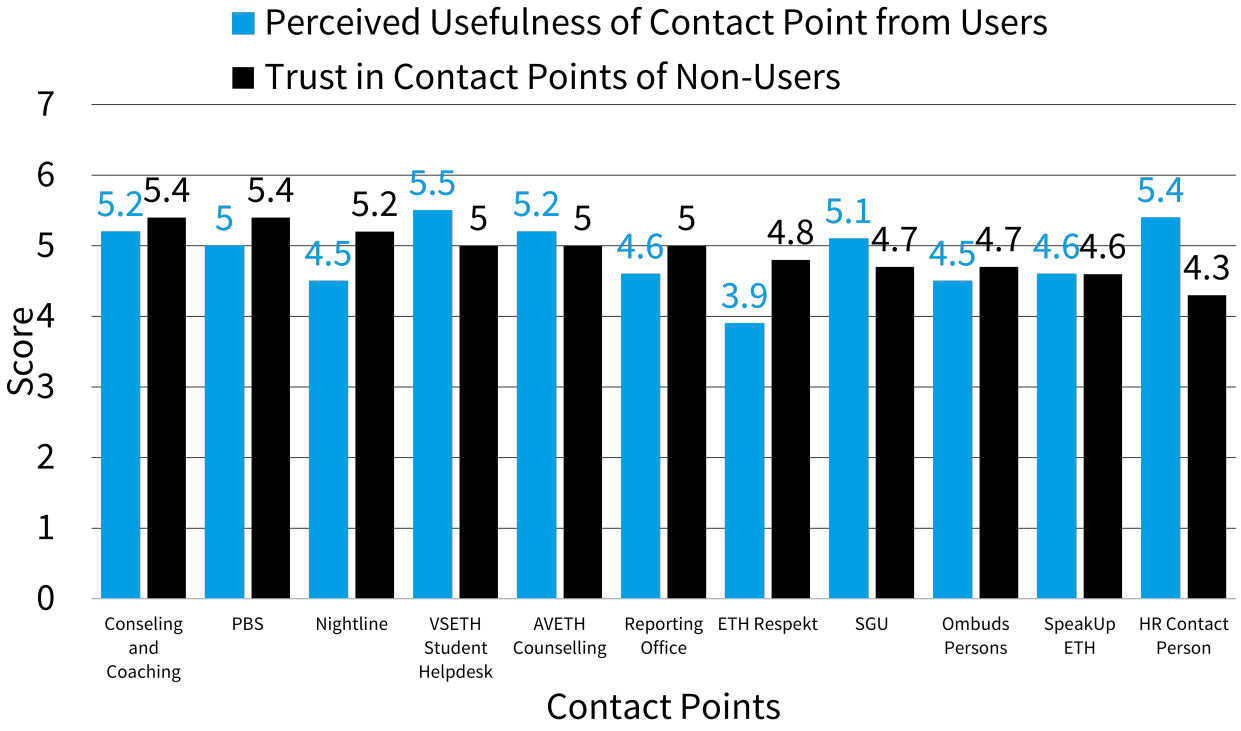

Figure 16: *Non-users' trust in contact points they are aware of, and the users' perceived usefulness.*

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lower confidence (Figure 20). A similar trend is observed in ETH's accessibility ratings, where these groups report lower satisfaction (data not shown).

Study Habits and Work Students planned an average of 29.9 ECTS in the spring semester of 2024, down from 32.3 in 2019. Younger and newer students planned for more credits, while older students and those at ETH longer planned fewer. No significant correlation with gender or mental health was found, though the number of planned credits varied across study fields. Most students under 27 regularly attended on-site, but attendance dropped significantly after this age (data not shown). Poor mental health was associated with lower in-person attendance, and attendance varied widely with study field. Half of the students extended their studies due to exam results, with older students and those with lower mental health more likely to do so. Students worked an average of 7.9 hours per week outside of their studies, down from 10.5 in 2019. Cis women and older students worked more hours compared to other groups. Work hours varied significantly across study fields and geographic background, with students from Eastern Europe and the Balkans working the most. Looking specifically at student employment at ETH, 68% of the students had never been employed at the university, 17% had worked for ETH before, and 15% were currently employed at ETH.

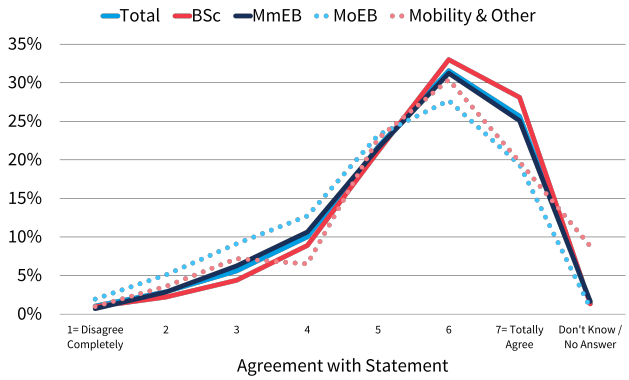

Figure 17: *Student agreement with "The students support each other in their study program", in relation to their institutional role.*

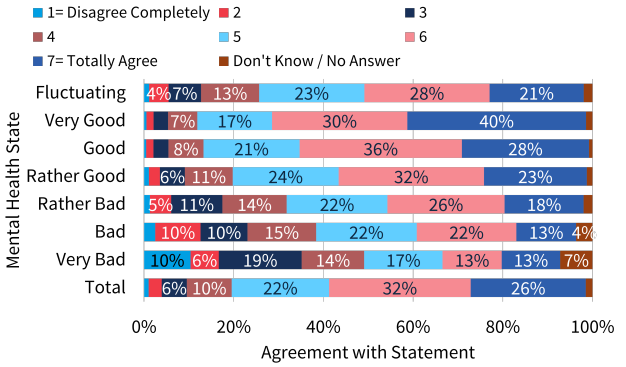

Figure 18: *Student ratings of the statement "The students support each other in my study program", in relation to to their self assessed mental well-being.*

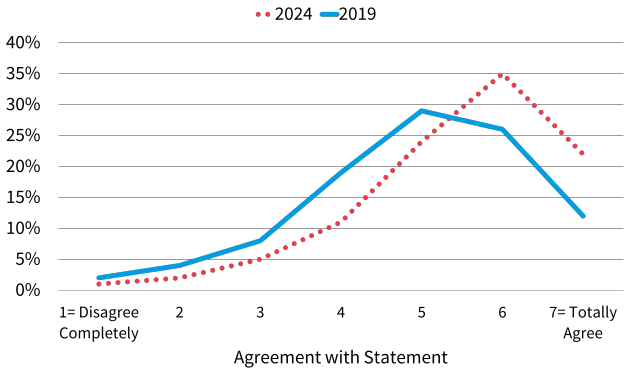

Figure 19: *Student agreement with the statement "I find joy in my studies and they are meaningful to me", compared between the 2019 and 2024 wiegETHs survey results.*

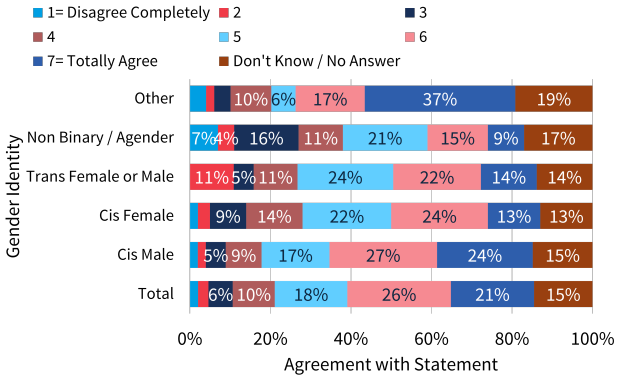

Figure 20: *Student ratings per gender identity: At ETH, I feel confident to speak up as a witness in discriminating/hurtful/harassing situations.*

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2.4.2 Mid-level Academic staff

The perception of the working conditions of mid-level academic staff was surveyed using a subselection of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) - short German version III (translated from the English version) [18]. This questionnaire addresses a wide range of topics and has specifically been designed to allow for adjustment based on context. As such, we sub-selected items that matched the context of the mid-level academic staff working at ETH, while preserving the most relevant constructs. The following content in this section provides a brief overview of the results offered by the questionnaire.

Working Conditions and Supervision 74% of the mid-level academic staff reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their working conditions, 66% reported being satisfied with their supervision and 62% were satisfied with how their group is managed (Figure 21). When asked about the relation with their supervisor, 82% of the participants reported that their supervisor trusts them, and that 74% trust their supervisor. 52% strongly agreed that their supervisor values and appreciates their work. However, only 44% of the mid-level academic staff reported that their supervisor is planning work in a satisfying manner, and only 46% report that their supervisors solve conflicts well (data not shown). Participants were also asked about support in daily interactions. 65% reported often or always receiving direct help from their supervisor, in contrast to 81% from their working group. In general, 89% reported that the atmosphere between colleagues is often or always good. Only 51% of the mid-level academic staff report that conflicts are solved in a justified way in their working groups. Finally, 55% of the participants strongly agreed that the work is distributed fairly (data not shown).

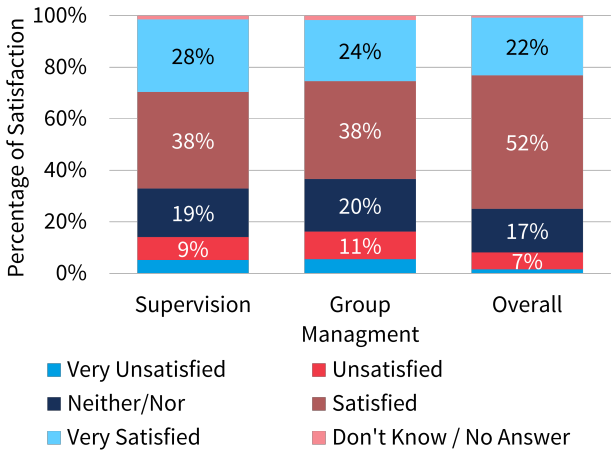

Figure 21: *Overall working satisfaction scores of the mid-level academic staff.*

Work Affecting Private Life We asked mid-level academic staff about their holiday flexibility and how work influences their private lives. Overall, 80% indicated they can generally decide when to take holidays. While most did not report negative effects on their private lives, 30% indicated that the energy required for work had a negative impact, and 25% reported the same for the time commitment. Additionally, 52% reported often or always finding it difficult to disconnect from work during free time, and 17% feel the need to go to work even when unwell.

Job Certainty & Integration Finally, we evaluated the mid-level academic staff's perception of job stability and their future career. 29% perceived finding a new job as difficult. Fear of unemployment to a "large" or "very large" extent was reported by 21% of respondents, with substantial differences based on geographical background. Only 10% of participants with a Swiss background expressed this concern, compared to 20% of those with a Western European background and 26% of respondents with a non-European background (data not shown). Overall, 66% of participants report that they felt that they could integrate at ETH, with particularly cis males feeling most welcome. 64% of all participants perceived ETH as barrier-free, with significant differences between genders. On average, cis males rate access as highest (5.3 on a 7-Point Likert scale), while other genders gave a lower score (for example, 4.6

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for cis females).

2.5 Discomfort, Discrimination & Inappropriate behaviour (DDI)

Discomfort, discrimination, and inappropriate behaviour (DDI) take many forms, yet understanding them is crucial for identifying patterns and revealing systemic issues. In this section, we will focus on who experiences or witnesses DDI at ETH, what kinds of DDI are reported, who is perceived as a perpetrator of DDI, and where DDI occurs. For all these questions, participants could give more than one answer for each experience or testimony, resulting in the sum of some DDI rates over a category exceeding 100% (e.g. behaviour types witnessed by multiple people multiple times). For this intermediate report, we focus on problematic behaviour observed particularly frequently. Other forms and intersections of DDI require further detailed analysis. Even if the perpetrator of a DDI incident may not intend to cause discomfort, to discriminate, or to behave inappropriately, the victim's experience of the incident is the deciding factor in this survey. Therefore, we consider that a respondent's interpretation of the cause for DDI is authoritative when defining instances of DDI. If a respondent experienced or witnessed DDI, they could categorise the DDI incident among the following causes: gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity/origin, language, religion, physical disability, mental disorder, social class, age, physical appearance, or position in the institutional hierarchy. The respondents could then further describe the discriminating or inappropriate behaviour relating to the DDI incident they experienced or witnessed.

The total DDI rate was calculated as the percentage of respondents who reported experiencing or witnessing at least one type of DDI incident. This was determined by subtracting the percentage of respondents who selected "none of the above" from 100%, as follows:

$$p_{DDI} = 1 - p_{No-DDI} \tag{1}$$

2.5.1 Who experiences or witnesses DDI?

A positive and important result is that 73% and 71% of the respondents reported never having experienced or witnessed DDI at ETH, respectively. Still, out of all respondents, 27% experienced and 29% witnessed some form of DDI at ETH. In general, the data shows that people who experience or witness DDI at a higher rate than the ETH average are mid-level academic staff, non-Europeans, non-cisgender people, non-heterosexual people, people that have been at ETH for a longer time or are older themselves, or people with a more negative mental health state.

Students and Mid-level Academic Staff The data shows that mid-level academic staff are more likely to experience or witness DDI than Bachelor and Master students (Figure 22). Out of all respondents that were 27 and older, 37% experienced some form of DDI at ETH. Of all respondents that were less than 25 years old, 22% experienced some form of DDI at ETH (see Figure 24). From the results in Figure 25, we can see that the longer people were at ETH, the more DDI they experienced and witnessed.

Non-European people Out of the respondents that stated their geographical background, 27% experienced some form of DDI at ETH. Those with a non-European background have the highest rate of reported DDI (Figure 23). For example, people with a Middle Eastern, Far Eastern, or Oceanian background are 8 times more likely than German-speaking Swiss people to experience DDI (Table 26). In general, non-Europeans are 5.5 times more likely than Europeans to experience DDI. Even within Switzerland, there are differences. Italian-speaking Swiss people experience a higher rate of language-based DDI.

Non-Cisgender people 20% of cis males experienced DDI at ETH, while cis females were twice as likely to experience some form of DDI (Figure 27). For transgender, non-binary, and agender respondents, this comparison climbs up to a factor of 2.9. 39% of non-binary or agender people, 30% of transgender people and 22% of cis women experienced DDI due to their gender identity.

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Non-heterosexual people 24% of heterosexual people experienced DDI, compared to 51% of pansexual, 44% of bisexual, 42% of asexual and 37% of gay/lesbian respondents (Figure 28).

People with a more negative mental health state The general mental well-being negatively correlates with the amount of experienced or witnessed discrimination. From the respondents who report having a "very bad" or "bad" mental state, 39% experienced some form of DDI at ETH, compared to 17% for those with a "good" or "very good" mental state.

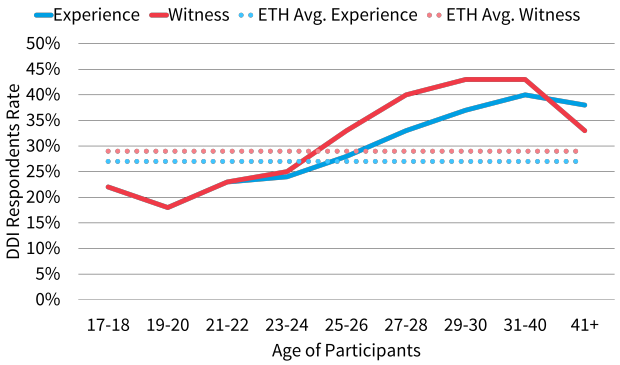

Figure 24: *Experienced and witnessed DDI rate based on the respondent's age.*

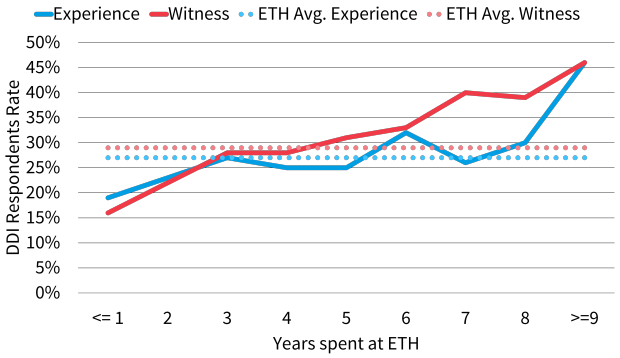

Figure 25: *Experienced and witnessed DDI rate based on the respondent's years spent at ETH.*

Country of origin	Respondents	Ethnicity Origin	Language	Religion	Gender identity
Middle East	168	30%	13%	8%	8%
Far East & Oceania	622	27%	18%	1%	6%
North & South America	332	21%	19%	3%	13%
Africa	44	20%	16%	11%	16%
Eastern Europe & Balkans	355	14%	11%	0%	6%
Western Europe	2,901	6.20%	7%	1%	10%
Italian-speaking CH	313	3.80%	27%	1%	7%
French-speaking CH	342	3.50%	15%	1%	10%
German-speaking CH	5,632	3.40%	2%	1%	9%
Romansh-speaking CH	57	0%	0%	0%	5%
Total	**10,766**	**7%**	**6%**	**1%**	**9%**

Figure 26: *Experienced DDI due to geographical background, language, religion, or gender identity based on the respondent's country of origin.*

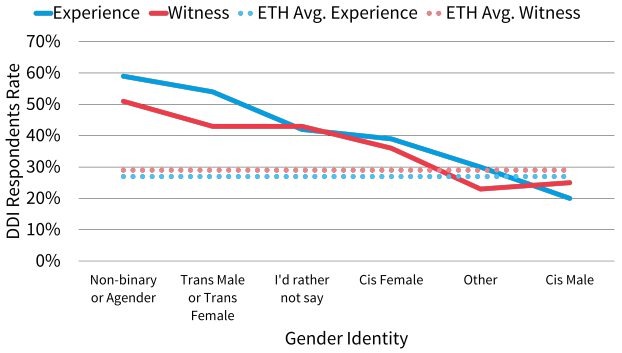

Figure 27: *DDI rate for all respondents by gender identity.*

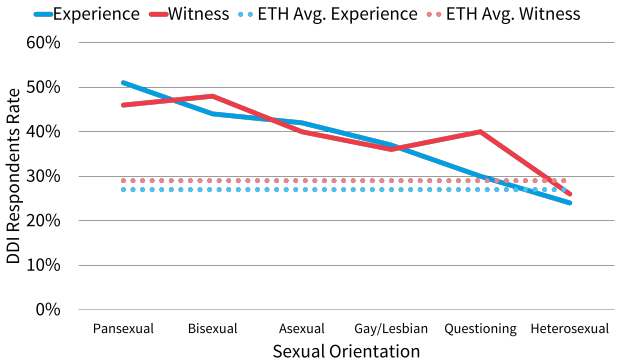

Figure 28: *DDI rate for all respondents by sexual orientation.*

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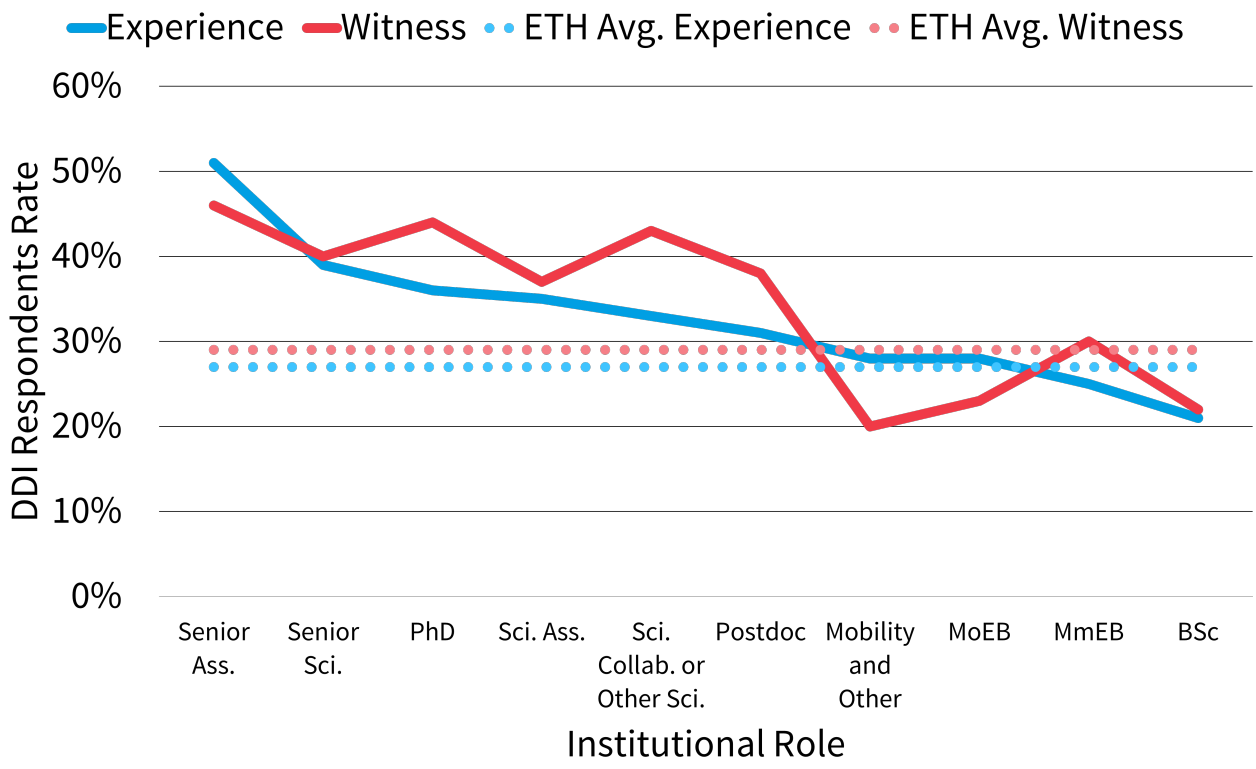

Figure 22: *Experienced and witnessed DDI rate per institutional role.*

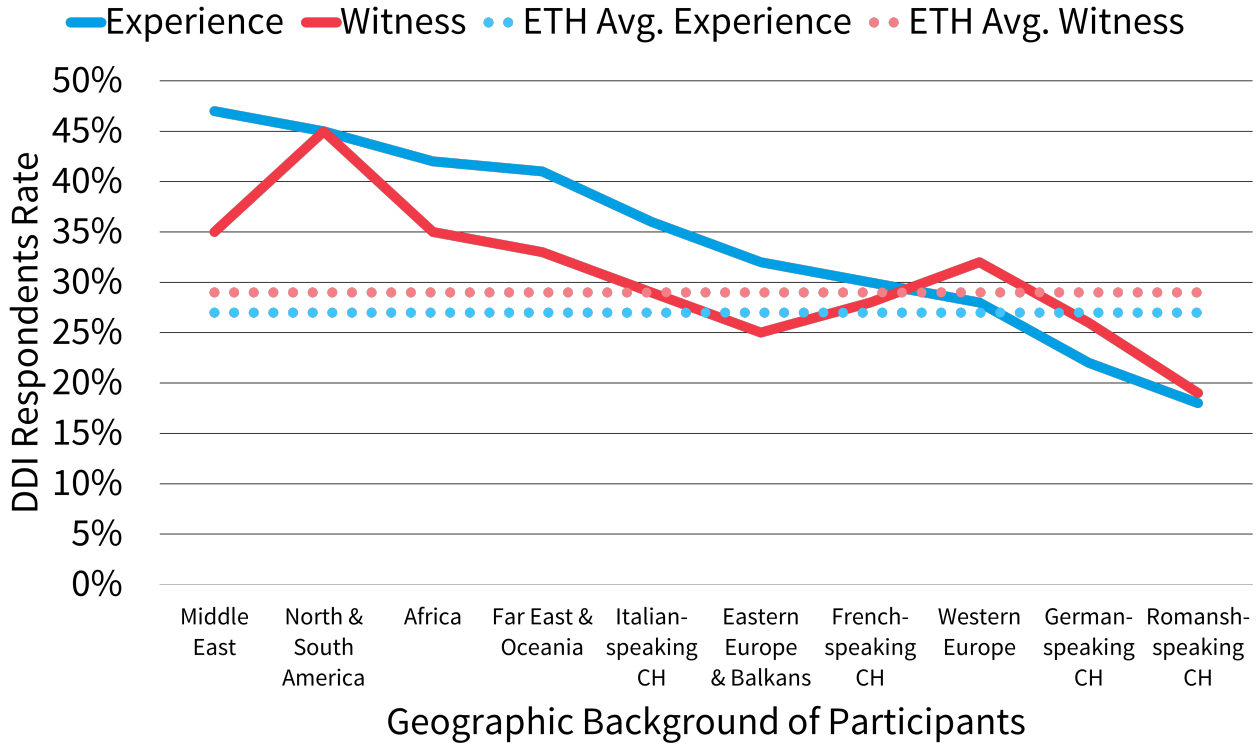

Figure 23: *DDI rate for all ETH respondents by their geographical background.*

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ehaviour	Gender identity	Hierarchy	Ethnicity Origin	Language	Appearance	Social class	Age	Mental disorder	Sexual orientation	Religion	Physical disability	Total
erbal harassment	68%	43%	66%	40%	68%	47%	47%	53%	69%	67%	43%	2420
ocial exclusion	21%	17%	31%	60%	23%	38%	26%	35%	15%	22%	39%	1293
njustified criticism	27%	42%	24%	18%	22%	22%	21%	42%	15%	25%	36%	1167
Refusal to provide information	10%	30%	9%	21%	4%	13%	11%	14%	3%	4%	14%	644
ggressive behaviour	9%	20%	11%	8%	6%	5%	6%	14%	10%	10%	14%	466
ther:	11%	11%	8%	4%	4%	7%	15%	10%	7%	12%	29%	384
ıtrusive behaviour	18%	2%	3%	2%	12%	2%	3%	5%	10%	1%	4%	296
ather not say	4%	6%	6%	6%	8%	12%	11%	4%	10%	5%	7%	280
Assignment of offensive tasks	11%	12%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	6%	1%	2%	4%	269
Intrusive physical behaviour	13%	2%	1%	1%	10%	2%	2%	3%	6%	1%	7%	203
arassment	7%	4%	4%	2%	5%	1%	2%	6%	3%	1%	4%	178
nwanted sexual acts	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	27
otal responses	1888	1507	1264	1127	441	361	294	241	230	219	56	7628
otal respondents	941	804	759	686	265	234	198	125	153	146	28	4339
Responses per respondents	2.01	1.88	1.67	1.64	1.66	1.54	1.48	1.93	1.5	1.5	1.97	1.76

Figure 29: *Rate of DDI behaviour experienced by the respondents (rows) and normalised by total respondents for every DDI causes (by column). DDI behaviours and DDI causes are shown from most to least prevalent.*

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	Institutional power			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Total Number at ETH	23,610 89%	1,599 6%	1,326 5%	26,535 100%
Respondents	9,908 92%	854 8%	334 3%	10,823 100%
Experienced Perpetrators	2,407 42%	1,079 19%	2,181 38%	5,667 100%
Witnessed Perpetrators	1,720 42%	691 17%	1,657 41%	4,068 100%

Table 2: *Institutional power of people at ETH, respondents, and perpetrators of DDI incidents, whether experienced or witnessed.*

2.5.2 What DDI behaviour is experienced?

For almost all DDI causes (see Table 29), verbal harassment (defined as offensive statements, disparaging remarks, stereotypes, slogans, jokes or depictions) is the most commonly experienced behaviour, varying between 40% and 69% among causes. However, people that experienced DDI because of their language report most often being affected by social exclusion (60%).

2.5.3 Who perpetrates DDI?

Respondents could identify the perpetrator of an experienced or witnessed DDI incident from a list, which we categorise into groups based on their relative institutional power:

- Low: Students and other people on campus
- Medium: Colleagues, other ETH staff
- High: Professors, team leaders, lecturers, assistants, and active VSETH / AVETH members

We also categorised respondents' current role at ETH into groups based on their assumed institutional power:

- Low: Students (Bachelor, Master's, Doctoral, mobility and others)
- Medium: Postdocs, Scientific assistants, Scientific employee, other mid-level academic staff
- High: Established researchers, Senior scientist or (executive) scientific collaborators

Table 2 provides an overview of the assumed institutional power for all members of ETH, survey respondents, as well as experienced and witnessed perpetrators. Although only 3% of respondents and 5% of people at ETH have high institutional power, perpetrators of DDI had high institutional power in 38% of experienced cases and 41% of witnessed cases. Relative to their numbers at ETH, someone with high institutional power at ETH is more likely to perpetrate DDI than someone with lower institutional power.
Another important element of institutional power is the institutional power dynamics in the incident of DDI itself. Per the table in Appendix B, we define institutional power dynamics as follows:

- High$<$Low: Higher institutional power perpetrates DDI against lower institutional power.
- Equal: DDI between peers.
- Low$>$High: Lower institutional power perpetrates DDI against higher institutional power.

By analysing discriminatory acts with regards to power dynamics, we show that the majority of discriminatory acts (60%) are perpetrated between peers. Although less than 5% of people at ETH have high power (Table 2), they are involved in 36% (38%) of experienced (witnessed) DDI acts (Table 3).

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	Institutional power dynamics			
	High > Low	Equal	Low > High	Total
Experienced Perpetrators	2,096 36%	3,510 61%	161 3%	5,767 100%
Witnessed Perpetrators	1,600 38%	2,484 60%	86 2%	4,170 100%

Table 3: *Institutional power dynamics in experienced and witnessed DDI acts.*

Perpetrator of DDI	Gender identity	Hierarchy	Ethnicity origin	Language	Appearance	Social class	Age	Religion	Sexual orientation	Mental disorder	Physical disability	Total
Students	25%	5%	19%	20%	8%	6%	4%	4%	4%	3%	1%	2137
Professors, team leaders	19%	42%	13%	9%	3%	3%	4%	1%	1%	4%	1%	912
Colleagues	23%	15%	21%	14%	7%	5%	5%	3%	3%	2%	1%	652
Lecturers	25%	35%	10%	14%	4%	3%	2%	3%	1%	4%	1%	559
Assistants	23%	26%	11%	18%	5%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%	1%	544
Other ETH staff	18%	21%	21%	24%	4%	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%	0%	427
Rather not say	18%	11%	20%	17%	6%	10%	5%	4%	5%	4%	1%	352
Other people on campus	29%	4%	27%	19%	7%	4%	2%	3%	4%	1%	0%	270
Others	24%	16%	19%	11%	5%	3%	11%	4%	3%	2%	1%	209
Active VSETH members	36%	7%	15%	12%	7%	6%	3%	4%	6%	2%	1%	141
Active AVETH members	32%	32%	12%	20%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25
Total responses	1542	1182	1135	1069	406	348	265	233	210	186	50	6226
Total respondents	941	759	686	804	265	234	198	153	146	125	28	4339
Responses per respondents	1.64	1.56	1.65	1.33	1.53	1.48	1.33	1.53	1.44	1.49	1.78	1.43

Figure 30: *Rate of DDI per type experienced by the respondents and normalised by total responses for every perpetrator of DDI (by row). Types of DDI and perpetrators of DDI are shown from most to least prevalent.*

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Location of discrimination	Gender identity	Ethnicity origin	Language	Hierarchy	Appearance	Social class	Age	Religion	Sexual orientation	Mental disorder	Physical disability	Total
In lectures, practice sessions, exams	26%	14%	18%	16%	6%	5%	4%	3%	3%	3%	1%	1360
On the premises or in the ETH facilities	22%	22%	18%	11%	6%	6%	4%	3%	4%	2%	1%	1296
In your everyday work	20%	18%	13%	27%	5%	4%	5%	3%	2%	3%	1%	1222
Social event outside ETH (with ETH people)	22%	23%	18%	7%	9%	8%	3%	3%	4%	3%	0%	555
At laboratory internships	24%	13%	21%	24%	5%	4%	2%	1%	2%	4%	2%	368
I'd rather not say that	16%	18%	18%	13%	8%	9%	5%	5%	5%	3%	1%	347
At a VSETH/student event	33%	15%	17%	6%	5%	6%	3%	3%	7%	2%	1%	294
At work at the ETH	24%	13%	13%	27%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	0%	258
Other:	20%	11%	12%	29%	3%	5%	8%	3%	3%	4%	1%	238
At an ETH event	30%	17%	20%	8%	5%	5%	4%	2%	5%	1%	2%	204
In a student dormitory shared apartment	20%	32%	19%	4%	4%	6%	3%	3%	3%	5%	1%	160
At an ASVZ event	21%	21%	34%	3%	11%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	146
On social media	26%	24%	11%	6%	5%	0%	4%	10%	11%	4%	1%	114
In an ETH/ASVZ toilet or changing room	46%	13%	9%	7%	7%	0%	2%	2%	11%	2%	2%	46
At an AVETH event	14%	14%	27%	18%	9%	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%	5%	22
Total responses	1542	1182	1135	1069	406	348	265	210	233	186	50	6630
Total respondents	941	759	686	804	265	234	198	146	153	125	28	4339
Responses per respondent	1.64	1.56	1.65	1.33	1.53	1.48	1.33	1.44	1.53	1.49	1.78	1.53

Figure 31: *Rate of DDI per type experienced by the respondents and normalised by total responses in each location of DDI (by row). Types of DDI and locations of DDI are shown from most to least prevalent.*

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2.5.4 Where is DDI done?

Table 31 shows the locations of and the reasons for DDI at ETH. Students experience DDI mostly during lectures and exams, while mid-level academic staff usually experience it at work.

2.6 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

The majority of students at ETH feel safe expressing their gender identity (Figure 32). However, notable differences are observed in the ratings between cisgender students and those who identify as trans, non-binary, or agender. Over 85% of cisgender students rated their agreement at 5 or higher on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 represents complete disagreement and 7 represents complete agreement. In contrast, 74% of non-cisgender students and only 39% of non-binary and agender students provided a rating of 5 or higher.

For the mid-level academic staff, there is also a difference between non cis people and others in how safe and comfortable they feel in expressing their gender identity and sexual orientation at ETH (Figure 34). 43% of non-binary and agender people provided a rating of 5 or higher. The number of trans people in this group was too small to draw conclusions.

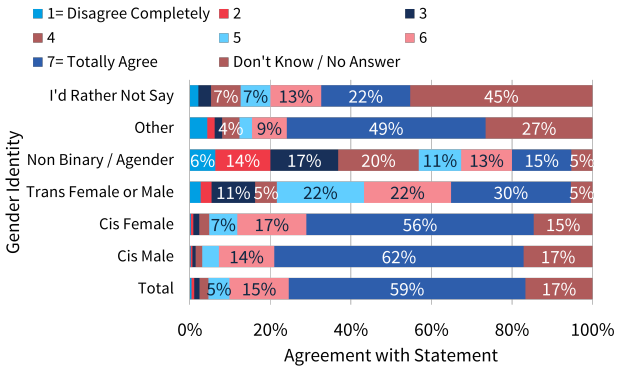

Figure 32: ***Students'*** *comfort level in expressing their gender identity in relation to their gender.*

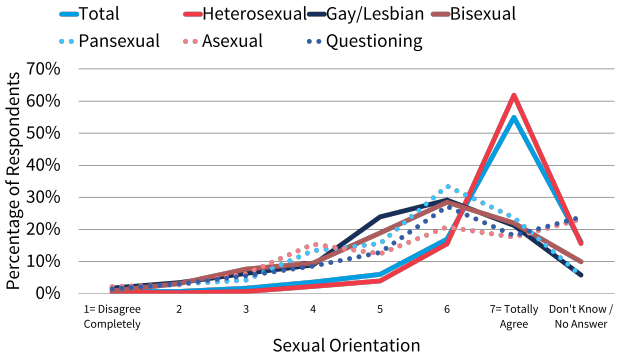

Figure 33: ***Student's*** *comfort level in expressing their sexual orientation in relation to their sexual orientation.*

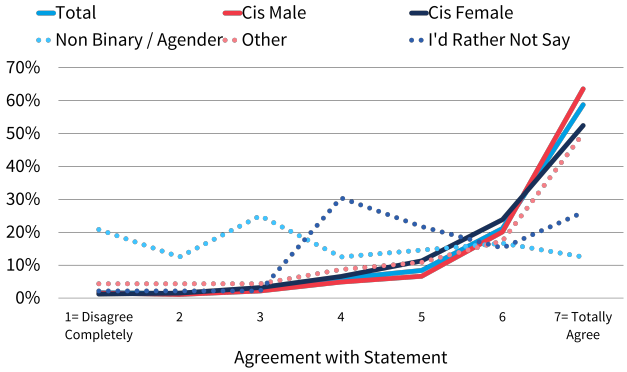

Figure 34: *The* ***mid-level academic staffs'*** *comfort level in expressing their gender identity and sexual orientation in relation to their gender. Categories with low response rates are excluded.*

2.6.1 Support by VSETH, AVETH, and ETH

In the survey, four potential measures were presented that might support LGBTQ+ members. Developed in collaboration with ETH Diversity, these measures aimed to inspire further ideas and serve as starting points for addressing the identified issues. LGBTQ+ participants were asked whether these measures would provide better support. On average, 35% of respondents found them helpful. The most favoured measure was the addition of a non-binary gender option in the ETH system, supported by 79% of non-binary and agender respondents (Figure 35). Additionally, 65% of trans, non-binary, and agender participants supported increasing the availability of gender-neutral toilets, showers, and changing rooms in ETH buildings.

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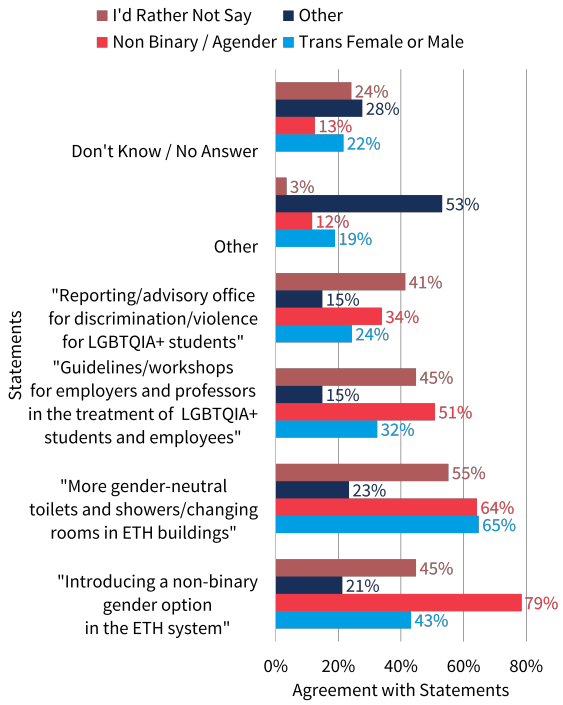

Figure 35: *LGBTQ+ students' wishes regarding the statement "How could ETH/VSETH/AVETH support you better?" with a preset of different possibilities.*

3 Conclusions and Outlook

The 2024 wiegETHs survey offers valuable insights into the experiences of students and mid-level academic staff at ETH, showcasing both strengths and opportunities for enhancement. The strong response rate of 40.8% demonstrates high engagement, providing a robust foundation for meaningful analysis and action. By identifying key trends in mental health, study and working conditions, and inclusivity, this report serves as a foundation for targeted actions to enhance well-being and equity across the ETH community. Most students and mid-level academic staff rated their mental health positively. Still, the analysis identifies high-risk groups with poorer mental health, which should be considered when designing tools and services to support well-being. These groups include trans, non-binary, and cis female individuals, as well as those with disabilities, non-heterosexual individuals, and doctoral students. While differences in geographical background require further exploration, preliminary findings suggest that non-Swiss members tend to report lower mental health scores on average. Cultural factors and language related to these varying backgrounds should be taken into account to ensure services are as accessible as possible. Notably, the groups identified as at higher risk for mental health disorders also report the highest usage of existing support services. Overall mental well-being correlates with service utilisation, suggesting that these resources are reaching those who need them most. Although this study did not assess service capacity, existing resources appear to be under significant strain. This includes the volunteer-led support groups of AVETH and VSETH, as well as the ETH-provided PBS. Trust in these contact points remains high, but awareness of available support services has declined since 2019. While over 50% of respondents are familiar with Nightline, most other services are known to fewer than 30%. Increasing awareness of these resources could help redistribute demand and alleviate capacity constraints, making this an important goal for the near future. Overall, both students and mid-level academic staff report high satisfaction with their study and work environments at ETH. Students have reported significant improvements since 2019, particularly in their sense of purpose in their studies, freedom in academic choices, and overall satisfaction with their free time. These are expected to further improve in the near future with the implementation of PAKETH [19]. While relationships with supervisors were generally quite positive, the mid-level academic staff raised concerns about work planning and conflict resolution. The introduction of new regulations on inappropriate behaviour reporting and conflict resolution in July 2024 represents an important step toward addressing these concerns. Future iterations of these surveys will help assess their impact. For now, we see that while most students and staff feel comfortable speaking up in difficult situations, confidence is notably lower among cis women, non-binary, and non-heterosexual individuals. Unequal workload distribution and planning remain concerns, sometimes leading to perceptions of unfairness. Transparent workload policies and effective mediation strategies could help improve group cohesion and satisfaction. Job security is another key issue, particu-

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larly for non-European researchers, who report significantly higher fears of unemployment than their Swiss colleagues. Given the prevalence of temporary contracts in academia, this insecurity—combined with the stress of career transitions—highlights the need for clearer career development pathways and stronger support systems at universities. Peer and colleague support is generally strong, though students in MoEB and larger study programs feel less supported than the average. This trend, while unsurprising, had not been formally illustrated before. Lower peer support and reduced in-person attendance correlate with decreased well-being among students. Further analysis could help shape targeted support strategies, such as inter-program peer events or buddy systems, to strengthen peer networks and enhance the overall student experience. ETH continues its commitment to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment. However, challenges related to discomfort, discrimination, and inappropriate behaviour (DDI) remain. While the majority of respondents feel safe and respected, 27% have experienced and 29% have witnessed DDI, with mid-level academic staff, non-European, non-cisgender, non-heterosexual individuals, and people with poor mental health, reporting higher exposure. Verbal harassment is the most common form, often linked to power imbalances in academic and workplace settings. Encouragingly, recent efforts, such as new regulations on inappropriate behaviour reporting, aim to address these concerns. Strengthening awareness, fostering open communication, and promoting inclusive leadership can help further reduce these incidents. By proactively addressing systemic barriers and ensuring that all members feel free to express their identities, ETH has the opportunity to lead by example in creating an academic culture rooted in respect and equity. We encourage VSETH, AVETH, and other ETH bodies to use these findings to guide and enhance ongoing diversity and inclusion initiatives. While over 85% of cisgender students at ETH feel comfortable expressing their gender identity, only 39% of non-binary and agender students share this sentiment. To assess concrete measures supporting LGBTQ+ groups, participants were asked to evaluate the usefulness of various proposed actions. Non-binary gender options and facilities were the most supported idea by non-binary and agender responders. The analyses presented in this report were designed to serve as a high-level overview of the results, and integrate data from both the student and mid-level academic staff populations. However, to fully leverage the potential of this dataset, it is crucial that AVETH and VSETH build on these initial findings with further in-depth analyses. Finally, the 2025 wiegETH survey successfully expanded to include the mid-level academic staff, enabling broader comparisons and long-term monitoring. To ensure the reliability of future trend analyses, maintaining consistency in survey design wherever possible— as demonstrated in the comparisons with the 2019 student data—will be essential.

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Position at ETH Position at ETH	% wiegETHs Respondents	% at ETH % at ETH	Response Rate
Bachelor student	40%	39%	43.5%
Master student	33%	33%	41.3%
Mobility Student	1.1%	0.9%	49.8%
Students with teaching diploma/ didactics certificate	0.9%	0.9%	41.2%
Doctoral student	17%	17%	41.5%
Oberassistent:in/ Established Researcher	1.9%	1.9%	40.8%
Postdoctoral researcher	4.2%	4.3%	41.1%
Senior Scientist	1.2%	1.2%	40.8%
Scientific Assistant	2.2%	0.5%	-
Scientific Collaborator	1.5%	1.3%	42.3%

Table 4: *Comparison institutional role demographic of respondents and ETH population.*

A Demographics

Table 4 shows a comparison of the institutional role demographic in the respondent rate and current members of ETH in total.

B Staff Salaries

In the 2024 wiegETHs survey, the mid-level academic staff was asked about their salaries, satisfaction, and other variables of interest. AVETH will release a separate report with additional details and analysis dedicated to this topic.

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Institutional power dynamics when columns (▶) discriminate against rows (▽)										
	Students	Professors team leaders	Colleagues	Lecturers	Assistants	Other ETH staff	Others on campus	Others:	Active VSETH	Active AVETH
BSc	e	h	e	h	h	h	e	n	h	l
MmBE	e	h	e	h	h	h	e	n	h	l
MoEB	e	h	e	h	h	h	e	n	h	l
Mobility and other students	e	h	e	h	h	h	e	n	h	l
PhD	e	h	e	h	e	e	e	n	l	h
Postdoc	l	h	e	e	e	e	e	n	l	h
Senior Ass.	l	h	e	e	e	e	e	n	l	h
Sci. Ass.	l	h	e	e	e	e	e	n	l	h
Sci. Collab. or Other Sci.	l	h	e	e	e	e	e	n	l	l
Senior Sci.	l	e	e	e	e	e	e	n	l	l

Figure 36: *Definition of the institutional power dynamics at ETH when columns discriminate against rows. e: equal, h: high to low, l: low to high*

C DDI

The following figure describes how we defined institutional power dynamics in the subsection “Who perpetrates DDI?” of the “Discomfort, Discrimination & Inappropriate behaviour (DDI)” section (Figure 36). Where we define power dynamics as:

- Hi>Lo: High institutional power discriminates against low institutional power = h (red)
- Equal: Discrimination between peers = e (yellow)
- Lo>Hi: Low institutional power discriminates against high institutional power = l (green)

D Tuition fees

During the preparation of the survey there was a discussion about a potential increase in tuition fees for foreign students at ETH. In order to be able to predict the consequences of such a measure, VSETH added questions to the survey on that topic as it would have been unrealistic to launch a survey solely for this topic at the same time and still get a good response rate. The questions have been evaluated separately however and the results can be found on: https://vseth.ethz.ch/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/wiegETHs-Auswertung-Studiengebuehren.pdf

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