



Co-funded by
the European Union

MENTiS

Mental health in high-performance sport

Promoting a comprehensive approach for athletes and entourage

Laura Spolverato

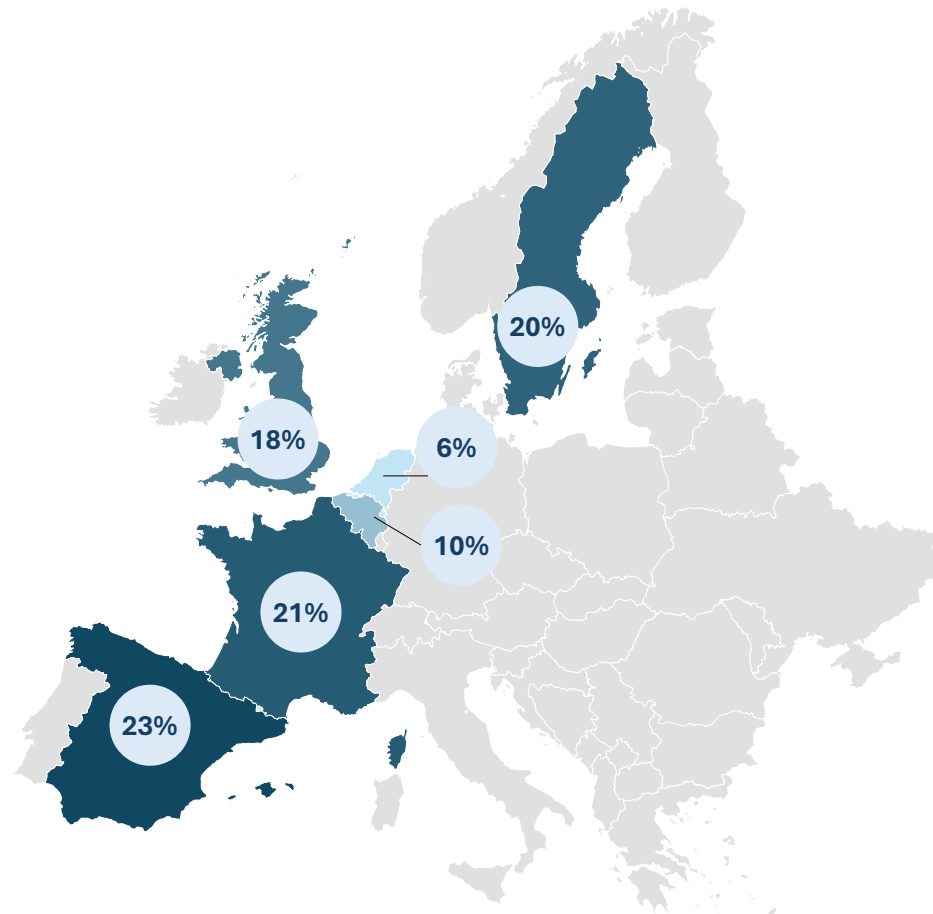
Vrije Universiteit Brussel



SPORT PSYCHOLOGY
& MENTAL SUPPORT
RESEARCH GROUP



MENTiS survey



1574 participants

- **796 athletes** ($M_{age} = 20.41$)

- **778 entourage members** ($M_{age} = 43.21$)

Demographics

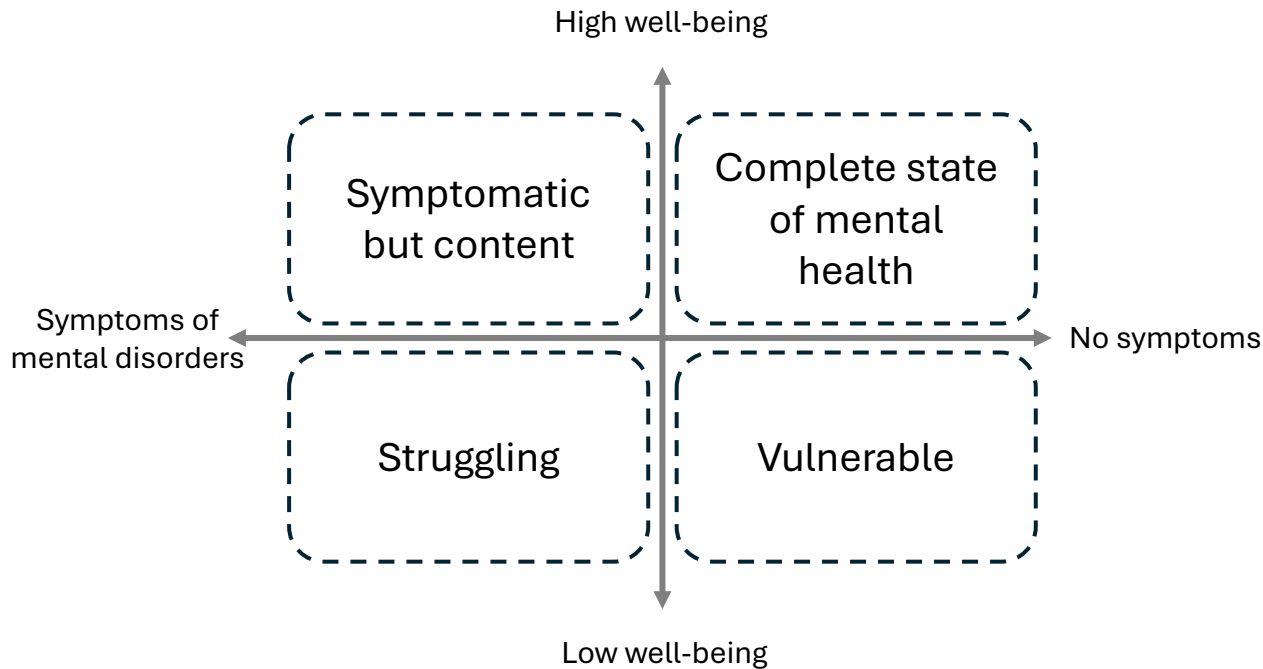
Athletes (n = 796)

- Gender distribution: **53%** Female / **47%** Male
- Type of sport: **61%** individual sport / **39%** team sport

Entourage (n = 778)

- Gender distribution: **44%** Female / **56%** Male
- Domain: **64%** athletic domain, **24%** personal domain, **12%** educational/vocational domain

Instruments



- **Mental ill-health**

- Depression (PHQ-9)
- Anxiety (GAD-7)

- **Well-being (MHC-SF)**

- Emotional WB
 - Social WB
 - Psychological WB
- Flourishing/languishing

Aims MENTiS survey

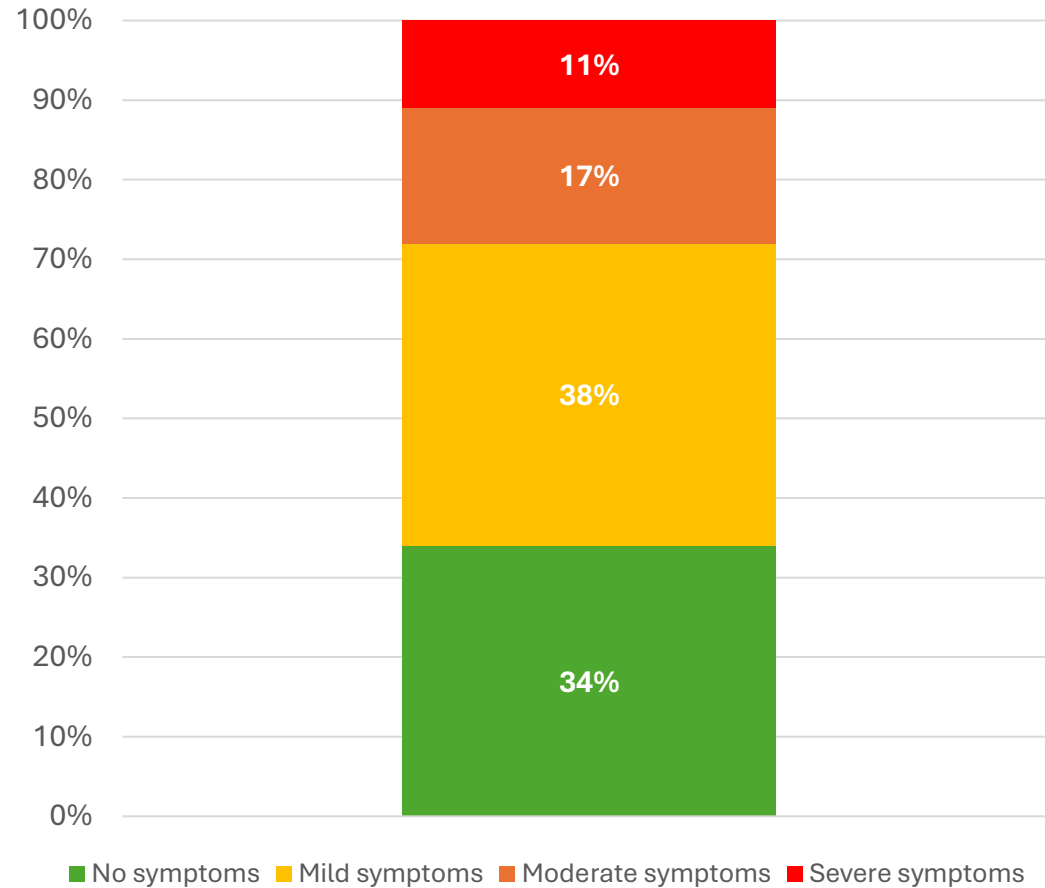
- 1 Examine athletes' and entourage members' mental health
- 2 Investigate their perceptions on mental health support

Aims MENTiS survey

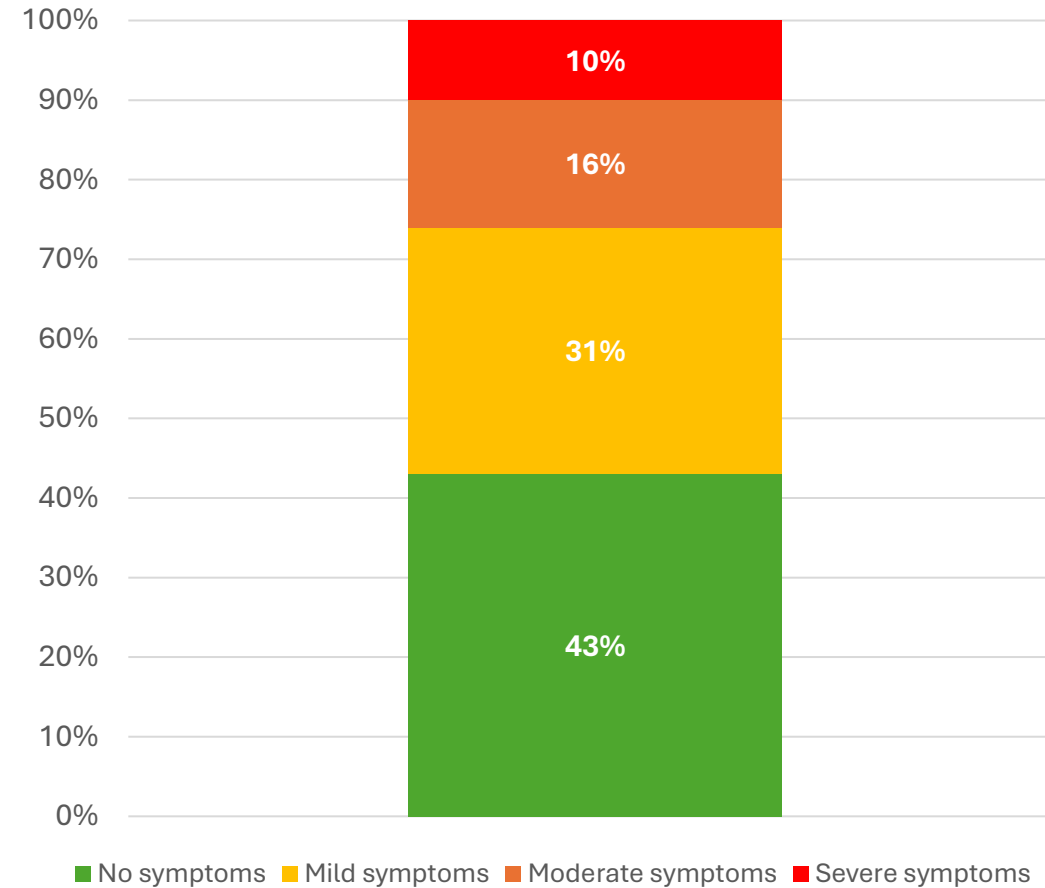
- 1 Examine **athletes'** and entourage members' **mental health**
- 2 Investigate their perceptions on mental health support

Athletes' reported symptoms of mental disorders

Anxiety (GAD-7)

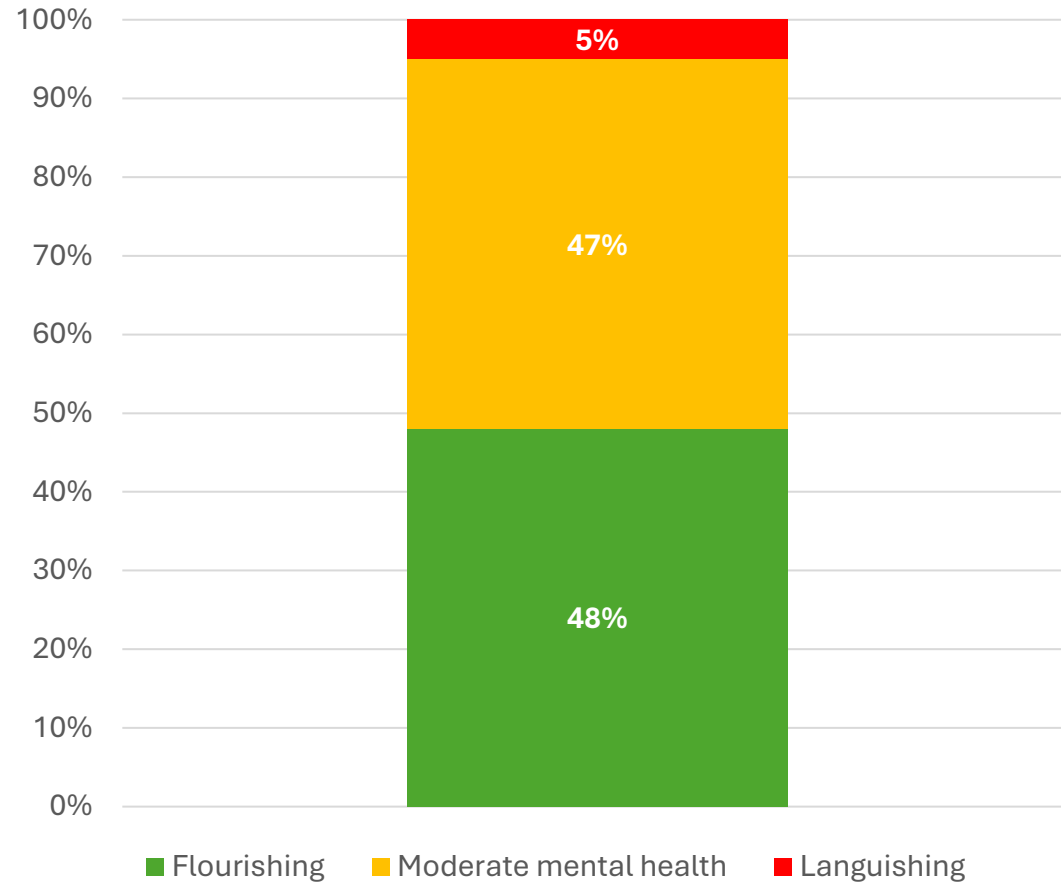


Depression (PHQ-9)

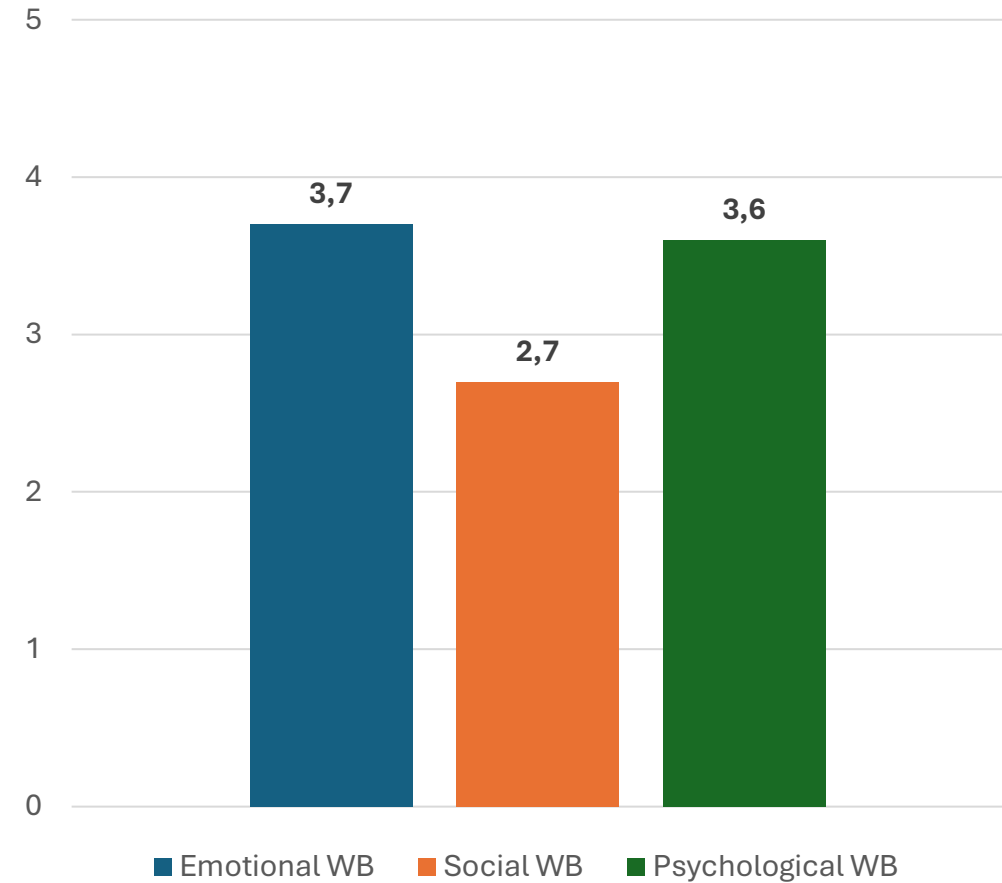


Mental well-being in athletes (MHC-SF)

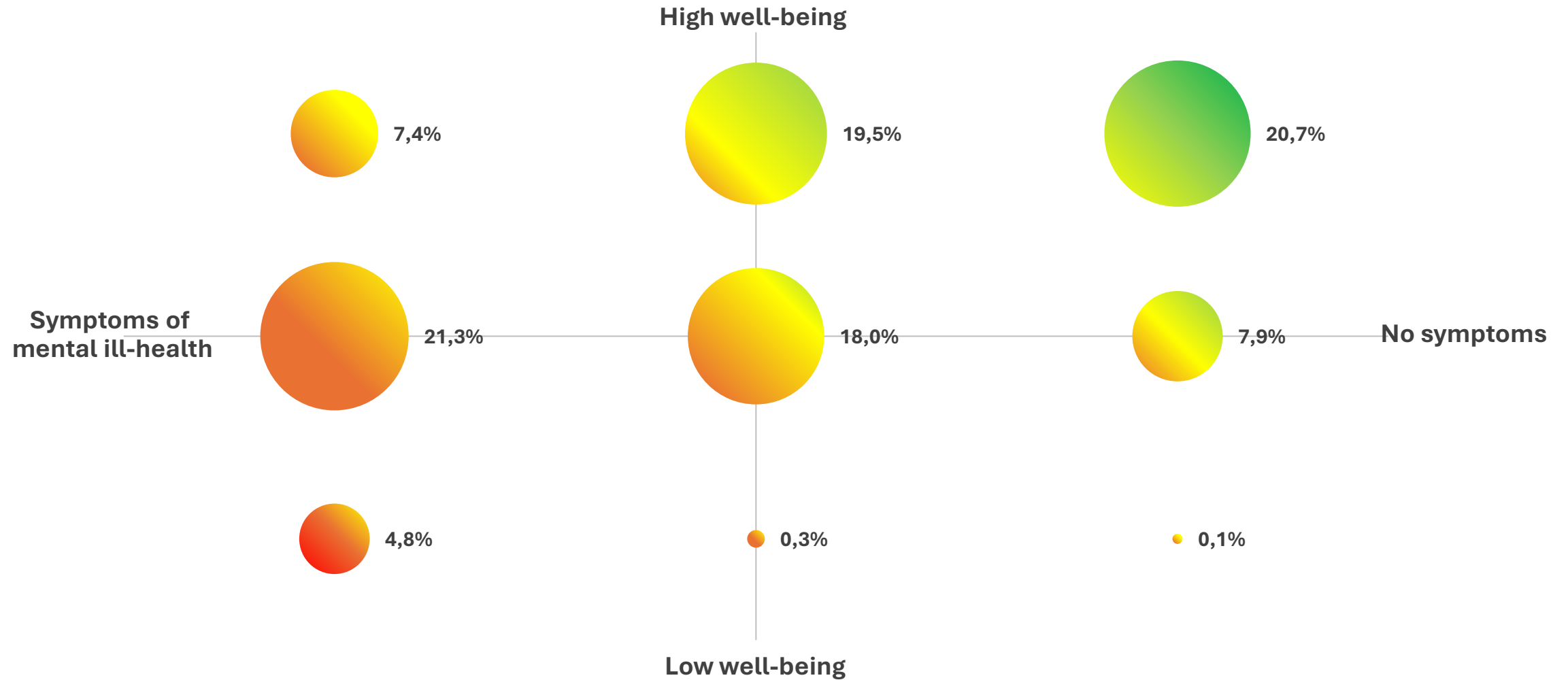
General well-being



Well-being subscales



Athletes' mental health

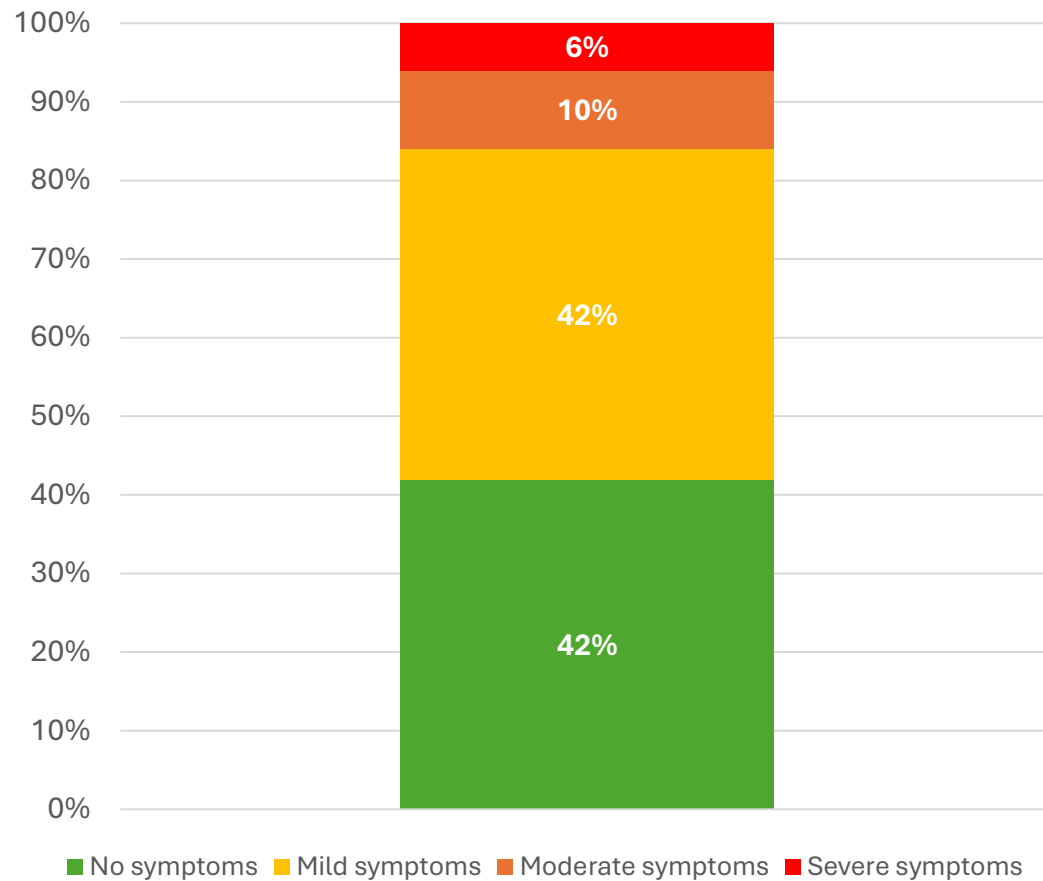


Aims MENTiS survey

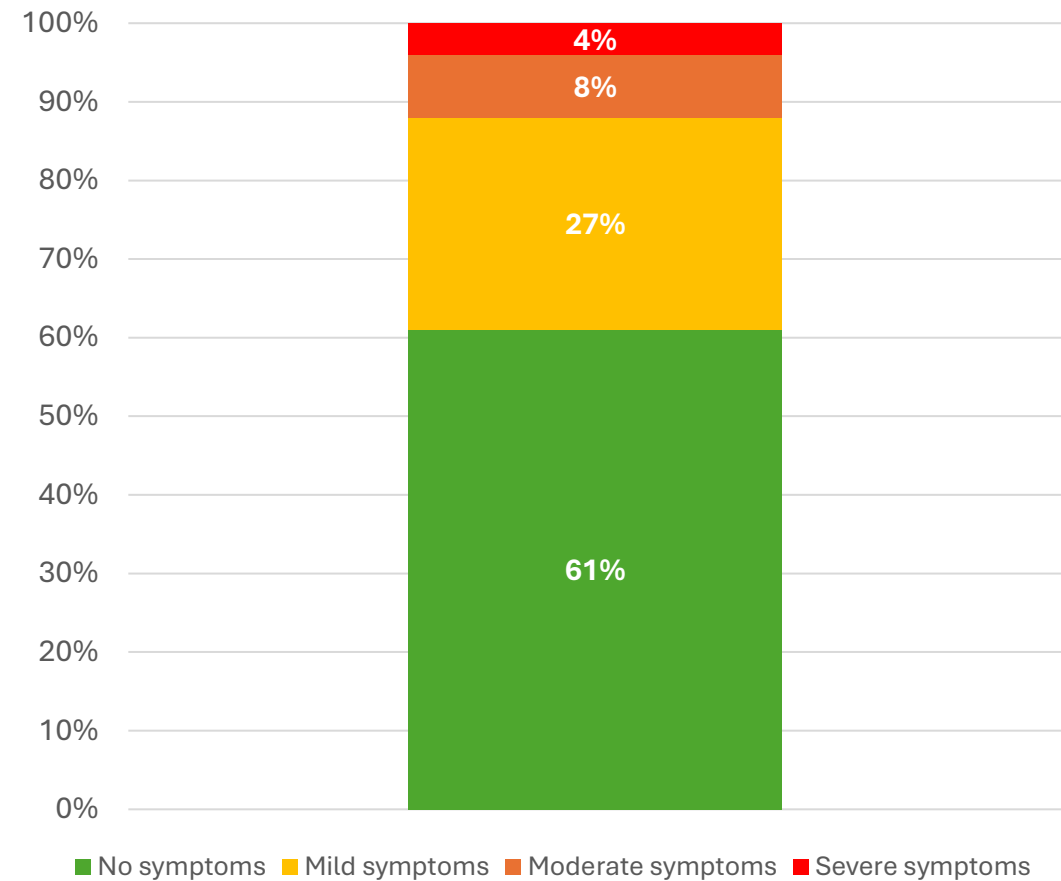
- 1 Examine athletes' and **entourage members' mental health**
- 2 Investigate their perceptions on mental health support

Entourage members' reported symptoms of mental disorders

Anxiety (GAD-7)

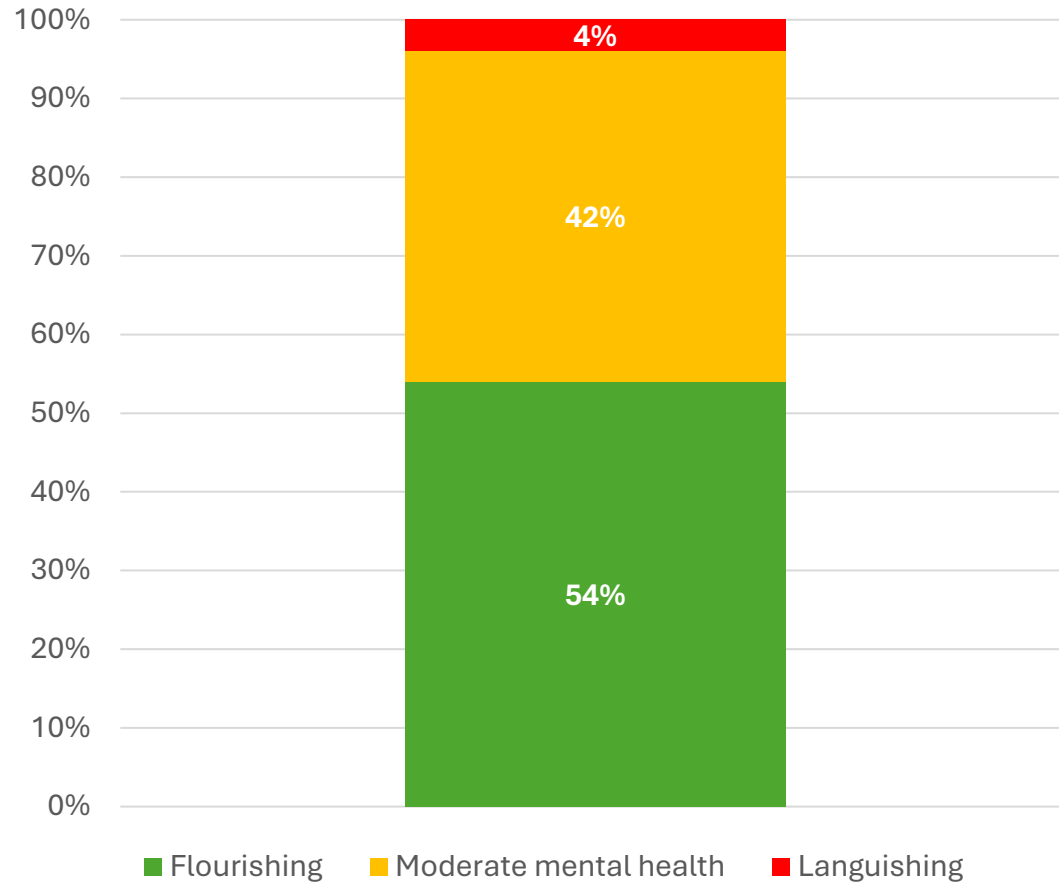


Depression (PHQ-9)

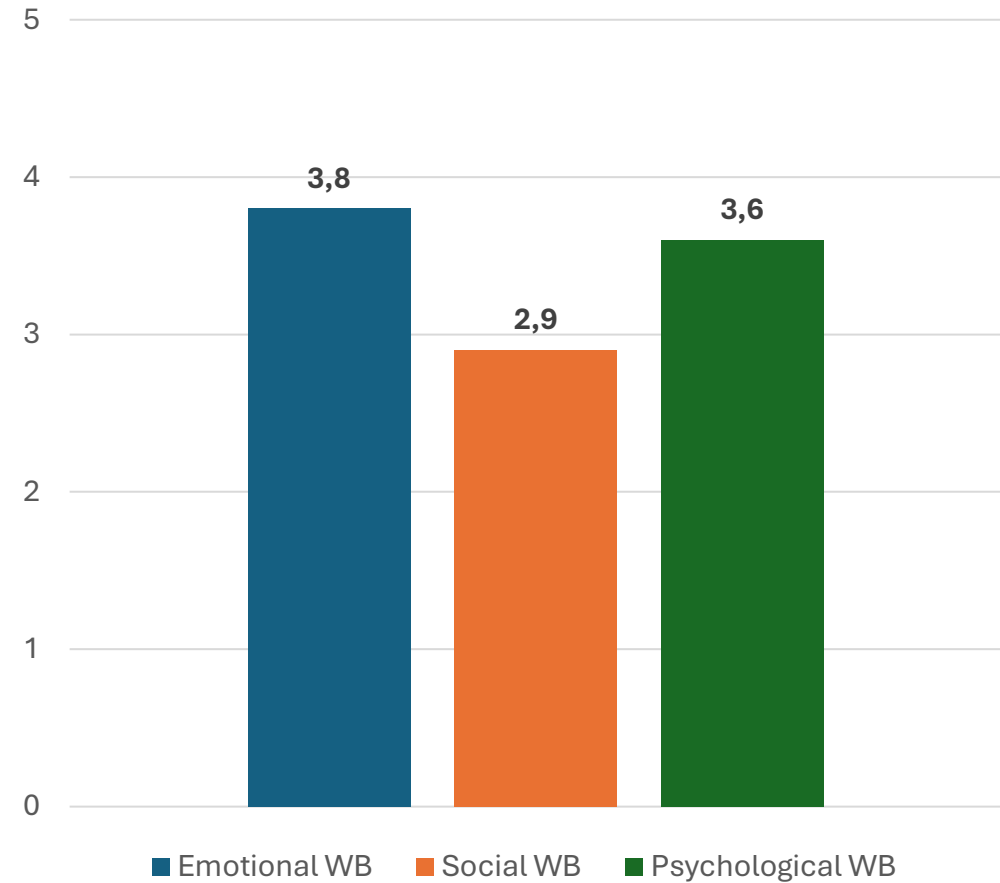


Mental well-being in entourage members (MHC-SF)

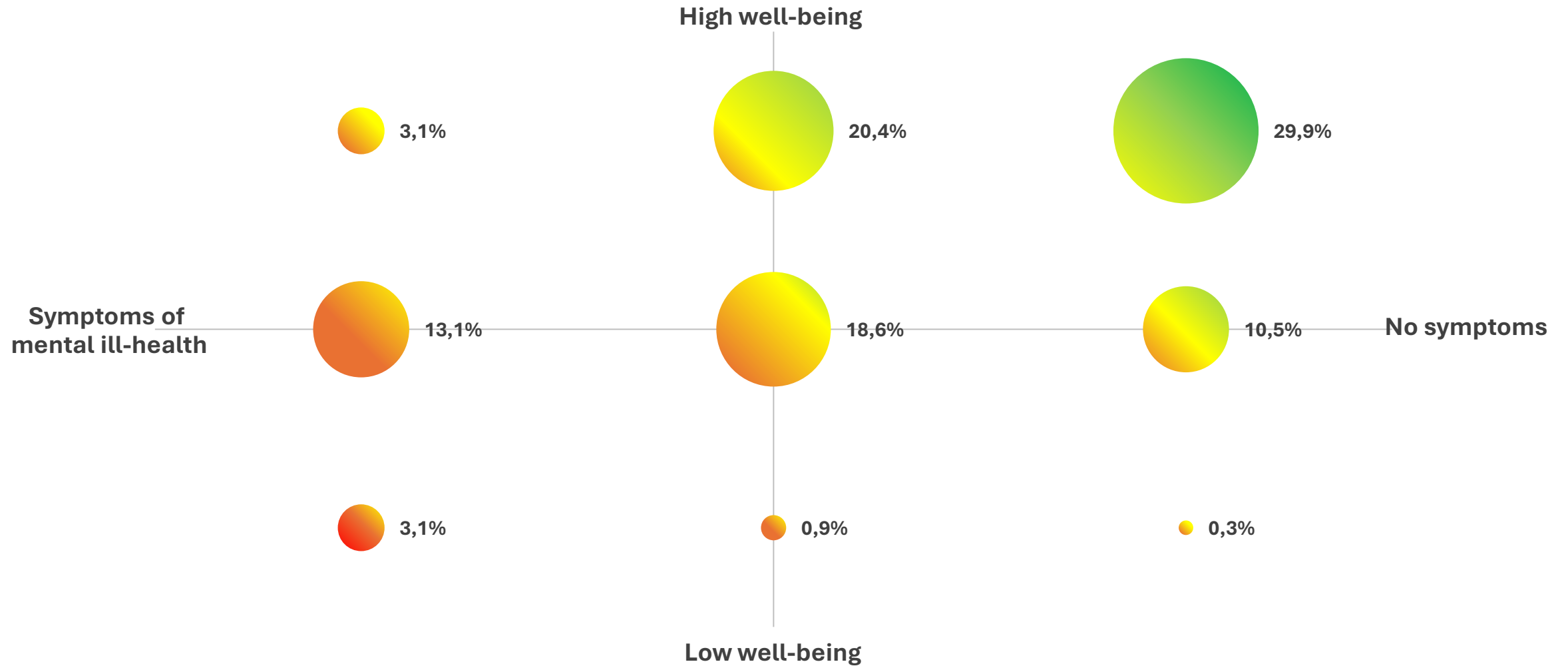
General well-being



Well-being subscales



Entourage members' mental health



Key findings

- **Athletes** display **higher prevalence** of depression and anxiety compared to entourage members.
 - **Athletes' results higher than previous studies** (Åkesdotter et al., 2020; Bilgoe et al., 2024)
 - **Entourage members' results show higher prevalence** of both anxiety and depression compared to a study on **coaches** (Bilgoe et al., 2024)
- Both athletes and entourage reported **similar scores of emotional and psychological well-being**, while **lower social well-being**, compared to previous studies (Van Slingerland & Durand-Bush, 2018)

A comprehensive approach to mental health

- **Mental health** is not just about the symptoms of mental disorders
- Presence of **different mental health profiles** in both groups
- Need for **tailored interventions** that consider the different mental health profiles, and that target both athletes and entourage members

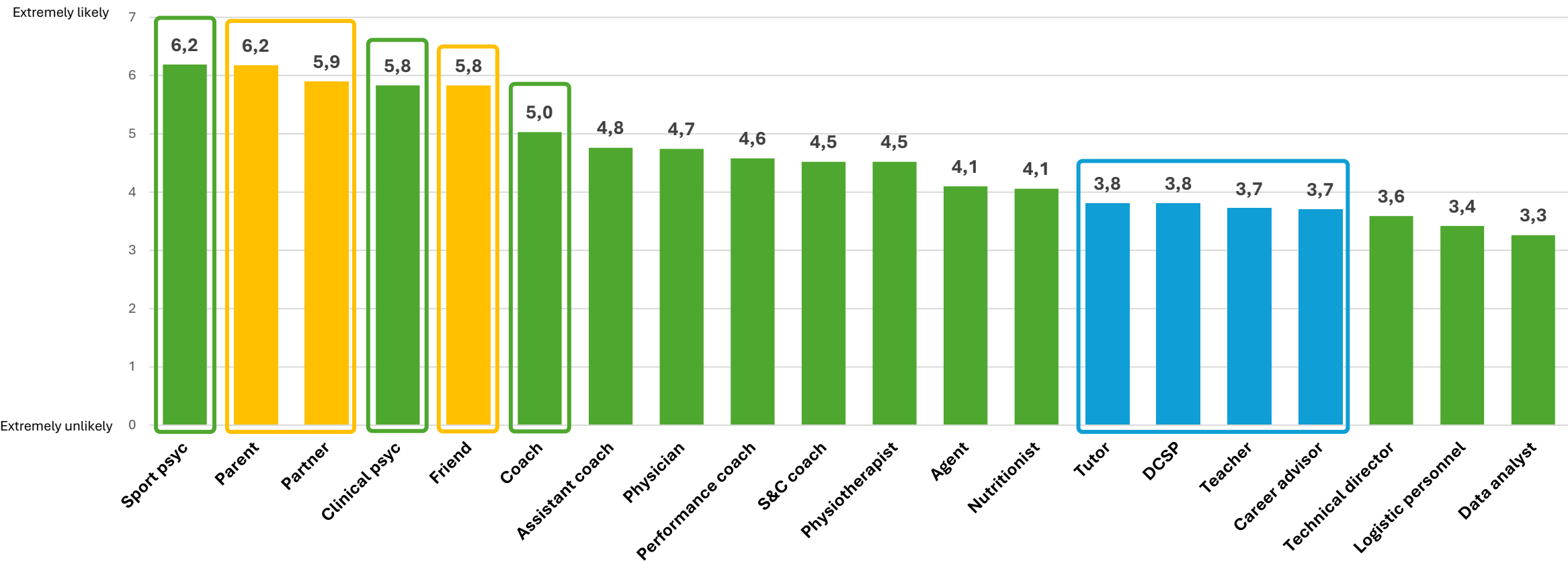


Aims MENTiS survey

- 1 Examine athletes' and entourage members' mental health
- 2 Investigate their **perceptions on mental health support**

Sources of mental health support

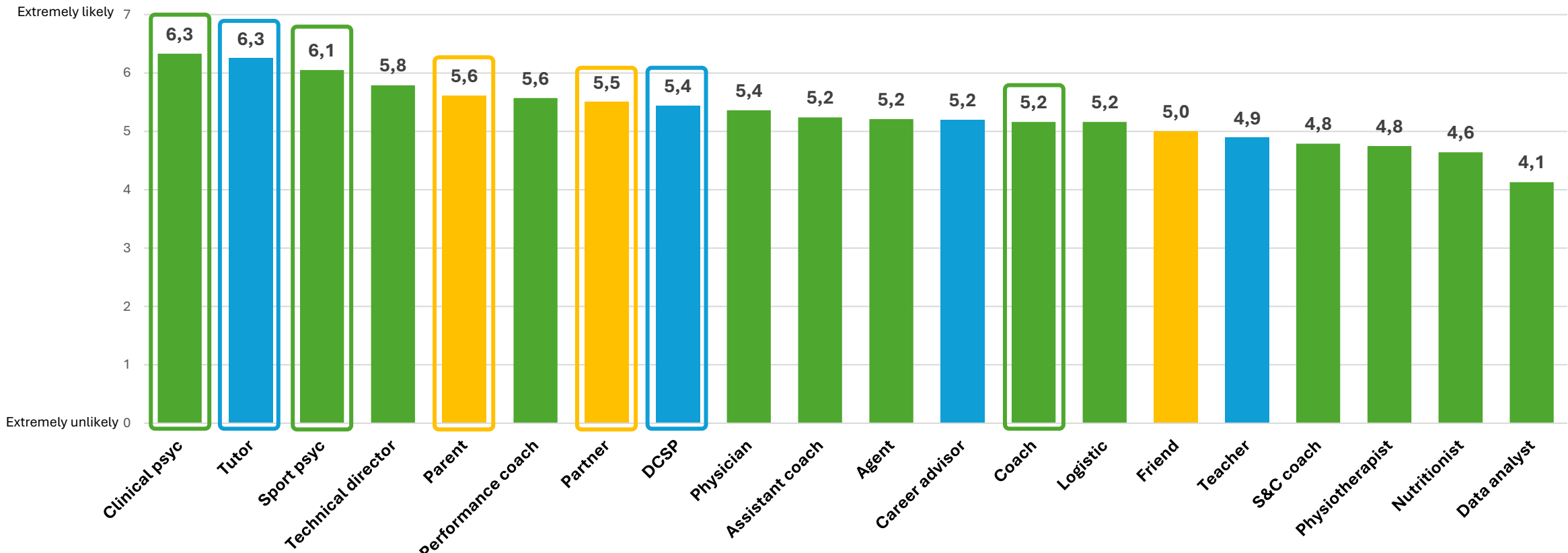
If you experienced a mental health problem, how likely is it that you would receive appropriate support from the following people?



- Athletic domain
- Educational/vocational domain
- Personal domain

Sources of mental health support

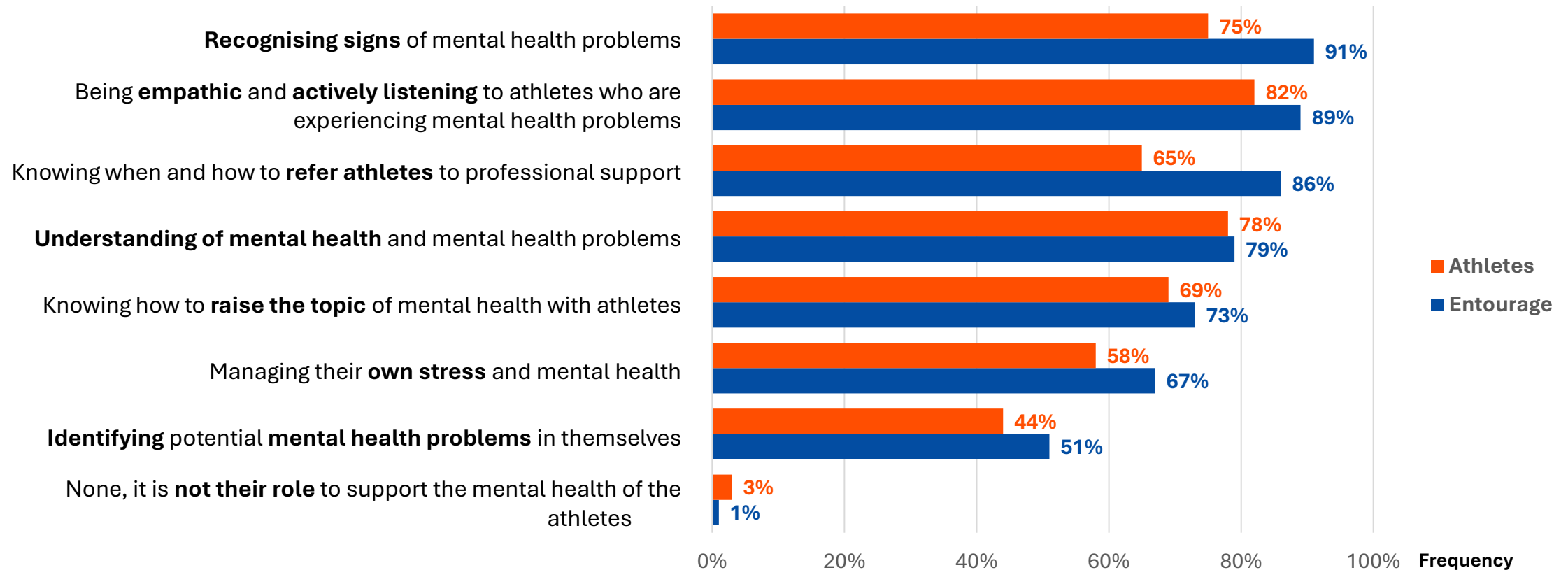
If your athlete(s) would **experience a mental health problem**, how likely is it that you would be able to **offer appropriate support**?



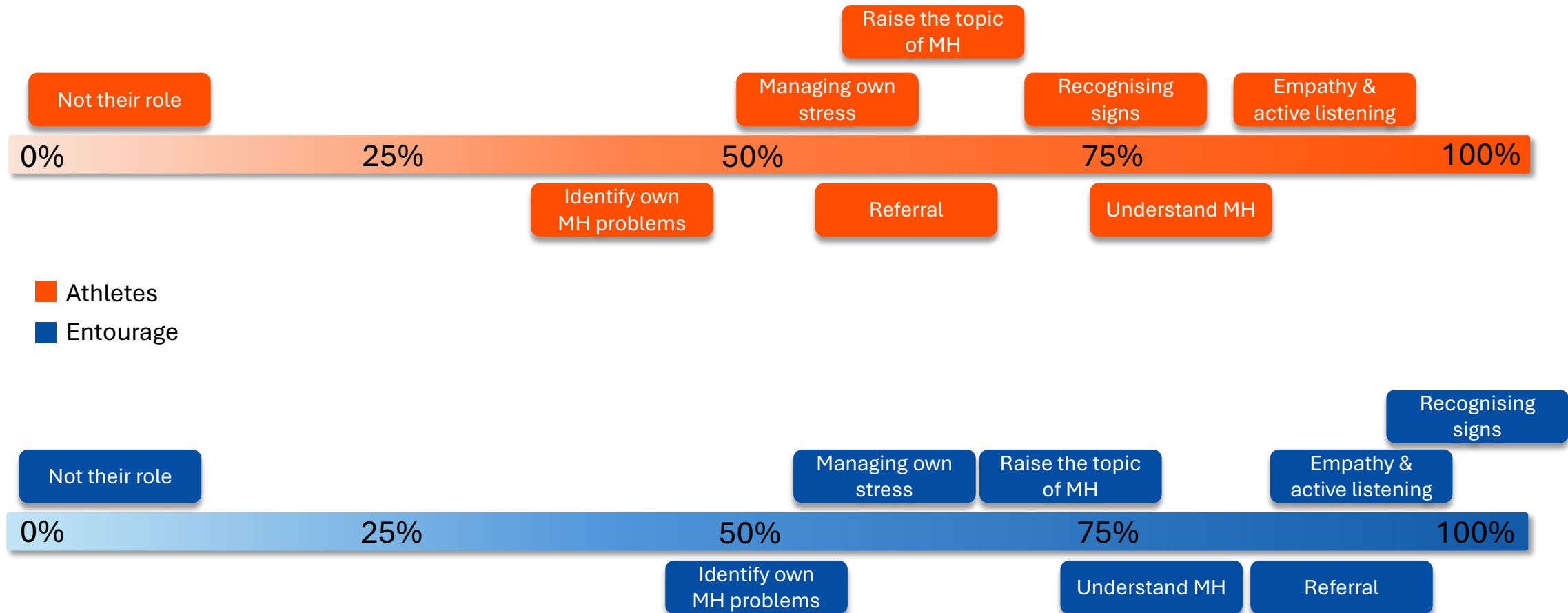
- Athletic domain
- Educational/vocational domain
- Personal domain

Mental health promotion competencies

What competencies do you feel are important for an entourage member to maintain the mental well-being of athletes?



Mental health promotion competencies



■ Athletes
■ Entourage

Athletes' perspectives on mental health promotion

Supportive and safe environment

- “Do not make the athletes feel that by sharing [about their mental health] they are weaker”
- “It is important for everyone to start **talking about the existence of mental illness in sport**. One key is to **dare to say that you feel bad** and that others **show compassion and the ability to help**, while it is important that a **psychologist/ psychiatrist is available**.”



Athletes' perspectives on mental health promotion

Self-awareness

- “Dare to say how you feel, get help if you need it, but also to **be alert to your own signals**. But also to ask the simple question to yourself, **how do I feel?**”
- “Be **honest towards yourself and your own body.**”



Entourage's perspectives on mental health promotion

Organisational support

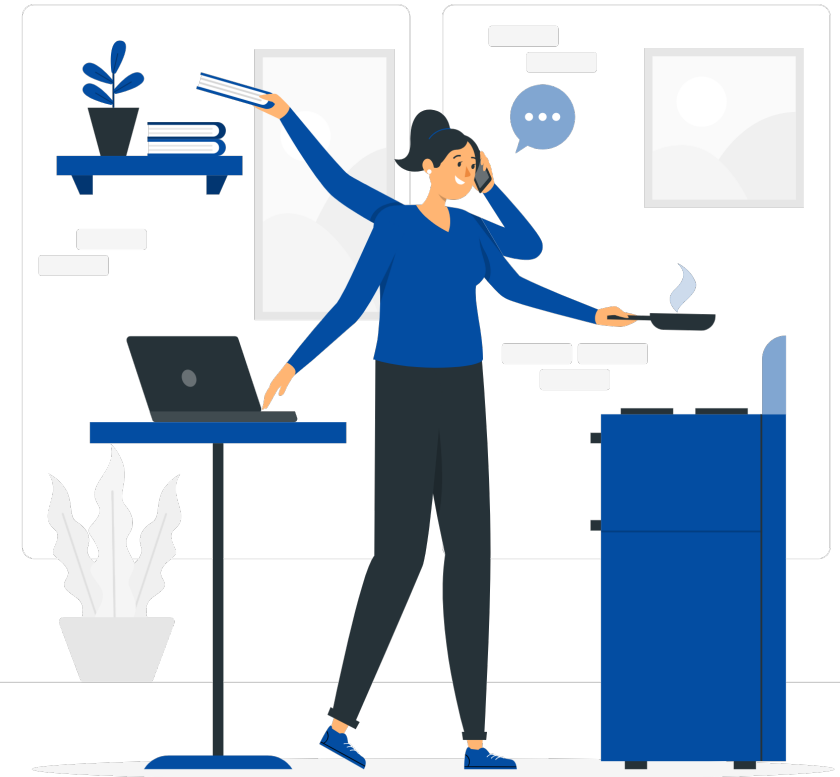
- “**Good leadership**, clear task alignment, peace and structure between staff members. **Clear guidelines and accountability** for people who don't follow these. If the staff don't get along, it always reflects on the athletes. Every discipline needs responsible people with **good manager qualities** to guard this and to quickly tackle problems before they escalate.”
- “The **lack of information is a source of stress for parents**, as is the transition to the HP centre with its lack of communication. Having a "guide" would be a real plus in tackling this new and intense environment.”



Entourage's perspectives on mental health promotion

Life balance

- *“Taking care of ourselves and also having our space to disconnect from sport because almost everything revolves around sport. And being able to be with friends and family.”*
- *“Having **time**: often the focus on your own health is forgotten because time is short when you are at camps and championships.”*



Promoting athletes' mental health

- **Enhancing** entourage members' **mental health promotion competencies** is crucial
- Both groups recognise the **role of entourage members** in mental health promotion
- Building a **safe and supportive environment** for athletes is part of the entourage's responsibilities
- Entourage feel the need to receive **support from the organisations** and to have a healthier life balance



Mental health in high-performance sport

Promoting a comprehensive approach for athletes and entourage

