

Measuring, maintaining and promoting Work Ability with the Work Ability Index (WAI)

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Dipl.-Psych. Melanie Ebener
Bergische Universität Wuppertal
Institute of Safety Engineering
German WAI-Network

1. The concept of Work Ability
2. Measuring Work Ability
3. Maintaining and promoting Work Ability in the company

Change of...

... demography

... labour market

... work situation

Therefore we have to

maintain and promote Work Ability

...so that employees

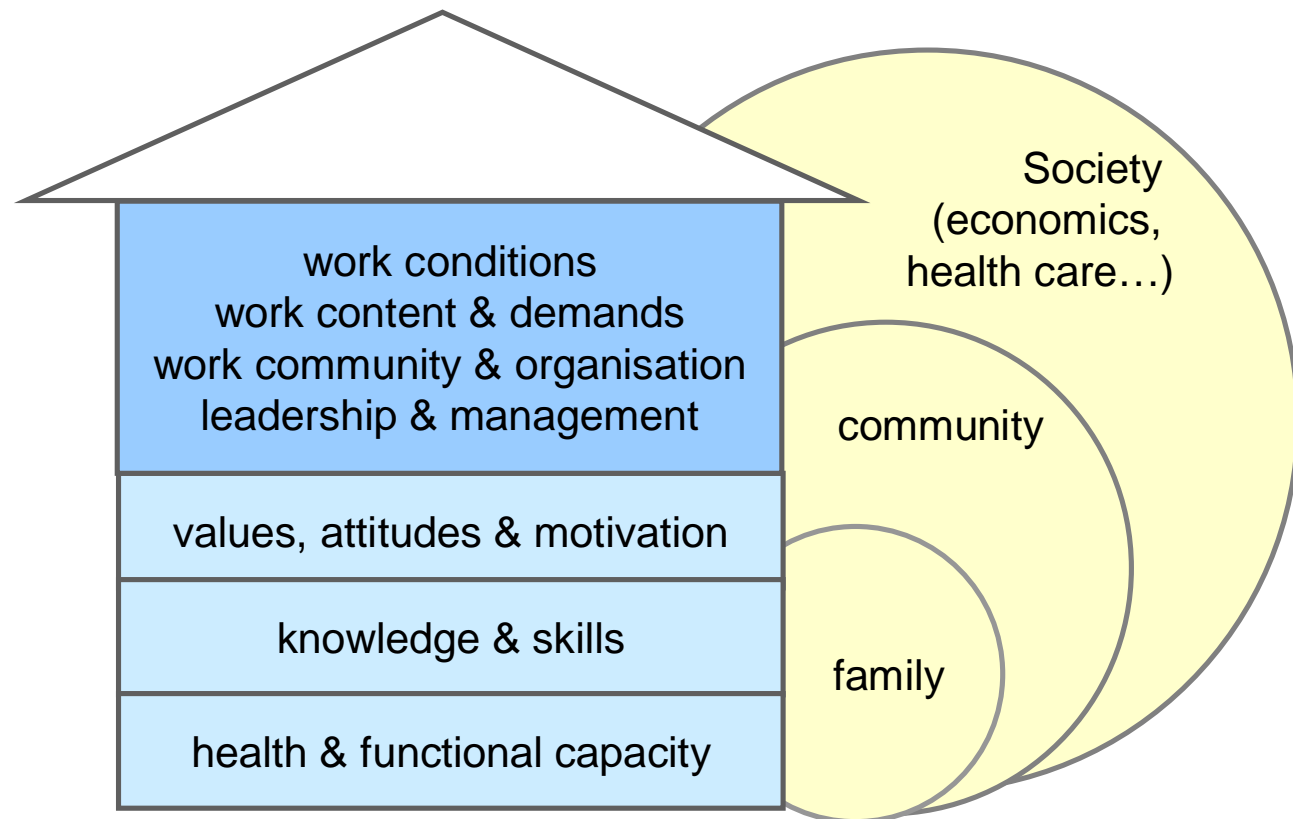
- from different groups (gender, nation, age...)
- can work as long as possible
- as long as they want
- in a healthy and productive manner!



- Developed in 1980s at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), Prof. Juhani Ilmarinen
- Interest of researchers: Promote working capacity of older employees (> 45 y)
- Question:
How can we predict today who will have reduced working capacity during the next years?
And how can we prevent this?
- Today: Used worldwide (translated in 25 languages) in Occupational Health and in research
- Synonym in Germany:
„Arbeitsbewältigungsindex“ (ABI)

How able is a worker to do his/her work with respect to the work demands, health and mental resources? (Ilmarinen, 2004)

► **Dynamic balance** of work factors and personal characteristics



Comparison of concepts: Work Ability vs. Sickness/Disability

WA focuses on resources (what is possible?),
not on shortcomings/deficits (what is impossible?)

WA focuses on the future, not only on actual state.

WA focuses on individual *and* organisational level.

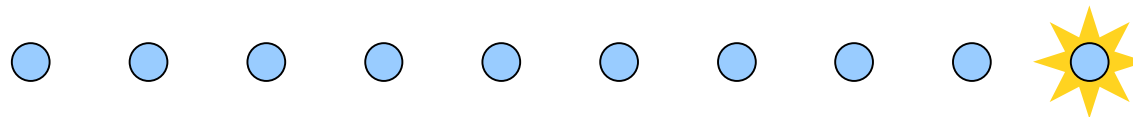
[Prümper & Richenhagen, 2011]



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„Think of the best working day in your lifetime, when you felt very productive and very happy. Assume that your work ability on this day had a value of 10 points.

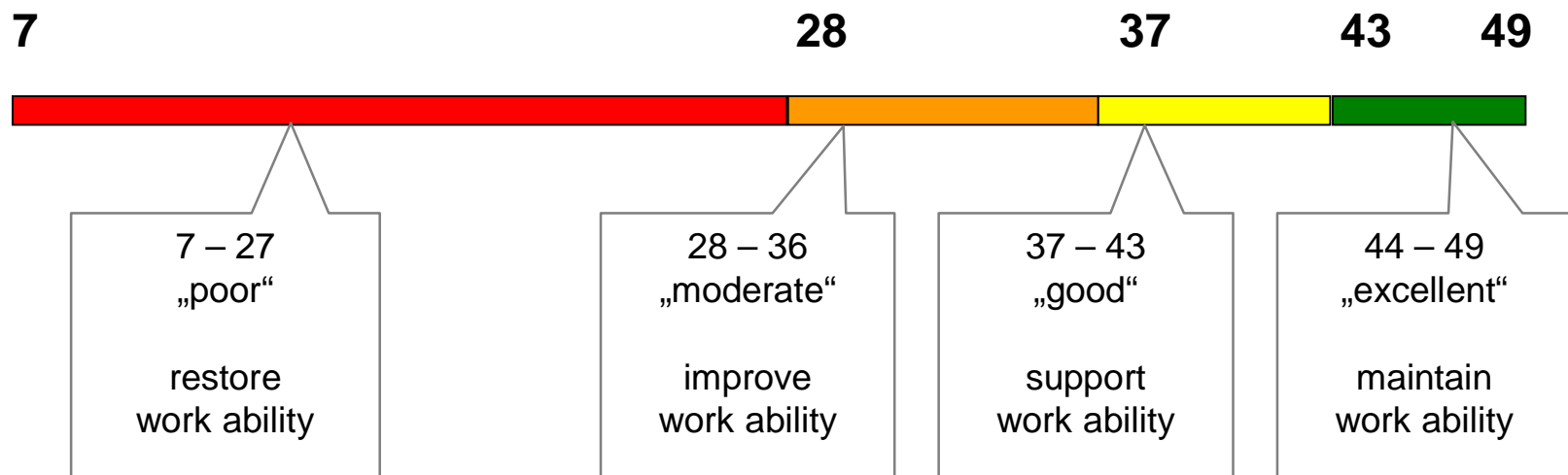
Compare it with your work ability today. How many points would you give it now (between 0 and 10)?“



	dimension	points
1.	Current work ability compared with lifetime best	0 - 10
2.	Current work ability in relation to physical & mental demands of work	2 - 10
3.	Number of diseases diagnosed by a physician	1 - 7
4.	Estimated work impairment due to disease	1 - 6
5.	Absences due to to sickness during the past year	1 - 5
6.	Own prognosis of work ability after 2 years	1, 4, 7
7.	Mental resources (enjoyment, activity, hope)	1 - 4
	WAI score	7 - 49

long & short version

Range: 7 – 49 points



Value for the **employee**: Feedback about individual state of Work ability

- ▶ Reflection, maybe initiation of private action

Value for the **company**: overview organisational state Work Ability

- ▶ need of measures/actions
- ▶ Priority of measures/actions
- ▶ If repeated: monitoring/evaluation of success of targeted measures

How?

- 1** As part of **periodic health check up**
[WAI + dialogue of 30 min.]
- 2** As part of **Integration Management** after
sickness (rehabilitation)
[repeated WAI-dialogues]
- 3** As **employee survey**
[Including individual feedback on WAI-result and
anonymised company report]
- 4** As **Work Ability-Coaching („ab-c“)**
[single structured WAI-dialogues with all
employees, followed by anonymized
company report – quantitative and qualitative]

Example



VHH PVG AG (1.600 employees)

ERGO

VERSICHERUNGSGRUPPE

ERGO insurance company
(about 20.000 employees)

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

DaimlerChrysler AG Wörth
(1.500 participants)

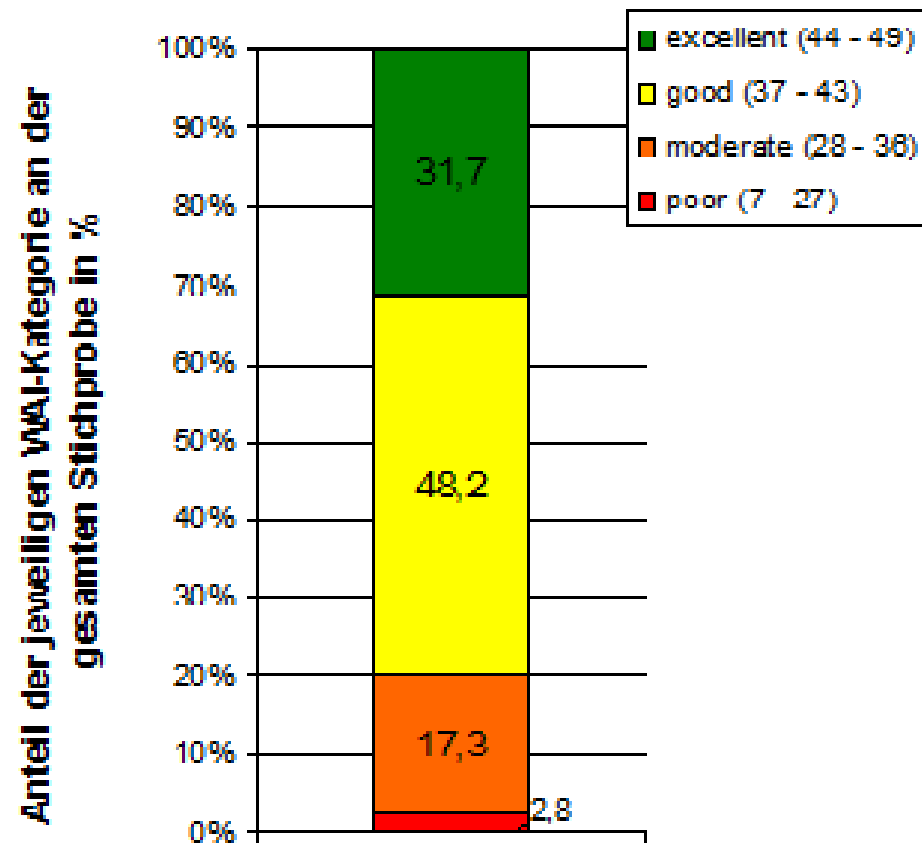
Projects

„ABI-NRW“ & „PIZA“

Step 1:

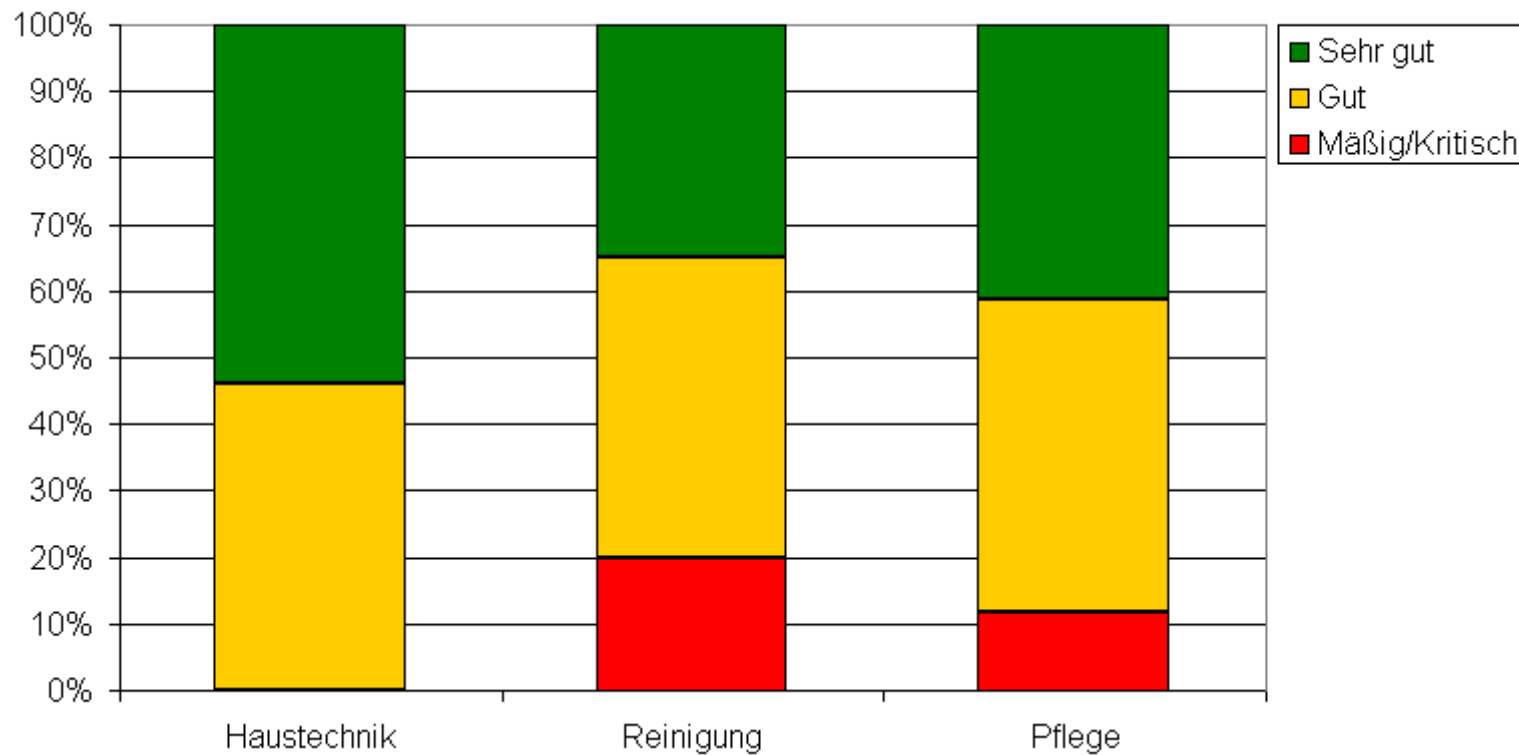
Classify individual results into the four WAI categories and show the respective percentages (example at right side).

Work Ability bei DaimlerChrysler
(Personal, Engineering, Technischer Service)



Step 2: Compare results of departments or groups (sex, age, full-time vs. part-time...) to identify where actions are needed most.

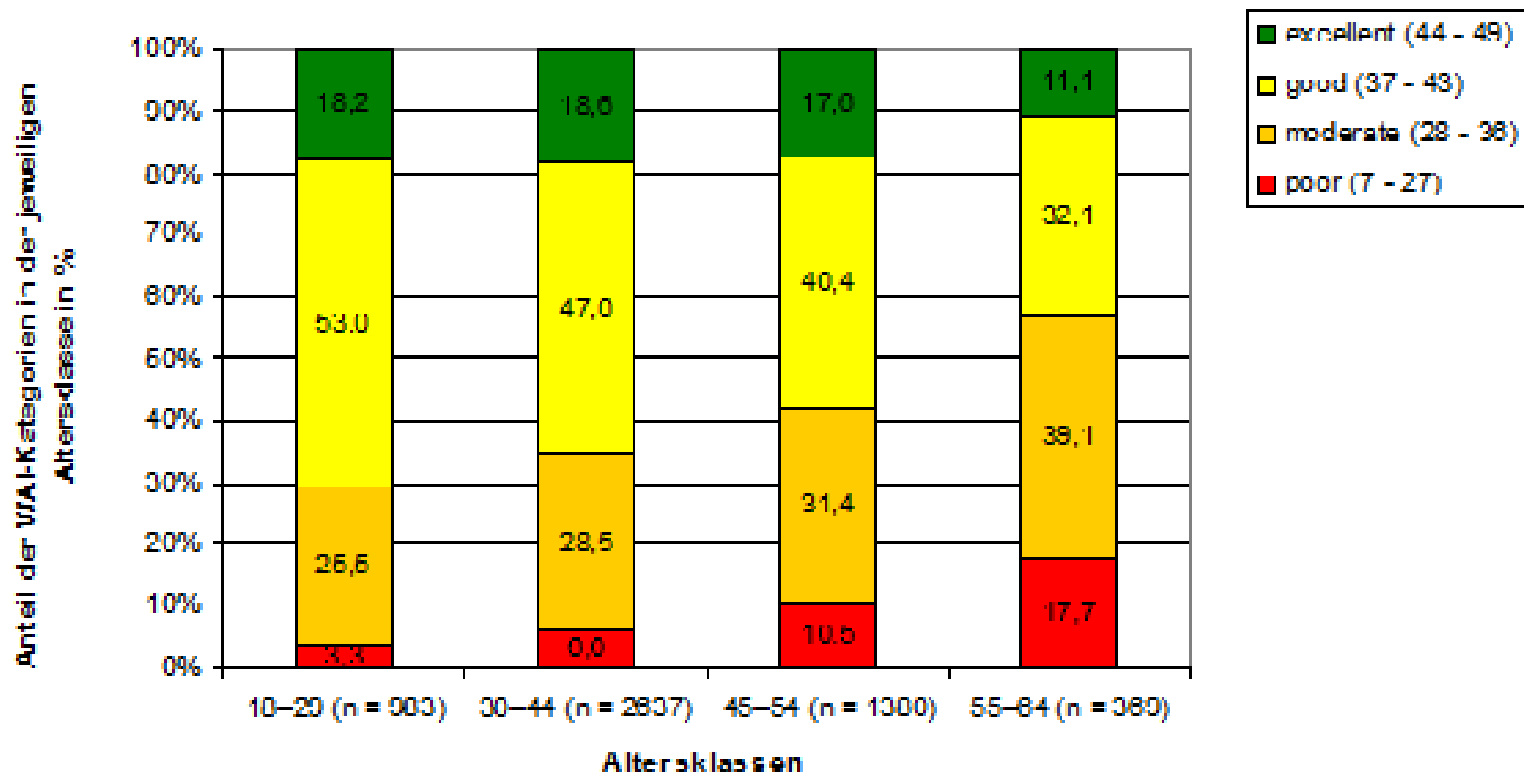
Percentage of employees per category in 3 departments (fictitious data)



Remark: Here the lower 2 categories are condensed to one because of data privacy protection.

Step 3 (optional): Compare company results with data from national reference data base (see reference data for women below).

Work Ability Index of german employees (female) acc. to age groups



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Health & functional capacity
(e. g. physical activity, lifestyle factors)

Work community
(e. g. management, interaction, climate)

Work and work conditions (e. g. ergonomics, hygiene, safety)

Professional skills and expertise
(pers. development, but also work design)

Development of measures by means of

- Workshops,
- Health circles,
- Expert consultation (statutory accident insurance, health insurance...)
- ...

- The WAI is an instrument for **trained experts**.
- Employees get **information** about the meaning of a WAI-result and the whole concept.
- Employees decide if they want to complete the questionnaire (**voluntariness**).
- **Confidentiality and privacy protection** have to be guaranteed. Individual data should not be made public (recommended: only group reports for 10 persons or more).
- Results should be evaluated by all relevant actors (OHS, Human Resources, works council...) and all relevant disciplines in the company (**participation**).
- A low WAI can not be interpreted as a characteristic of a person but as a **maladjustment between a special work and a special person**.

- WAI „objectifies“ the Work Ability of people in a simple way.
- The employees gets a clear feedback about his personal state.
- The company gets an overview of the Work Ability of the labor force as starting point for targeted actions.
- The WAI can be used for the evaluation of success of targeted actions in Occupational Health & Safety.
- The Work Ability concept („house“) is suited as a framework for the integration of OHS, Human Resources and external actions (e. g. workplace health promotion from statutory health insurance).
- Implementation of WAI helps to bring up topics like „Occupational Health Promotion“, „Work Design“ and „Age management“ in the whole company.

Thank you for your kind attention!

WAI-Network Germany

- We offer information, advice and training concerning Work Ability Index.
- We build a national reference WAI-database für different occupations.
- We bring together people and their knowledge of WAI.

Membership is free of charge.

Visit our website to learn more! www.arbeitsfaehigkeit.net



Dipl.-Psych. M. Ebener

wai@uni-wuppertal.de

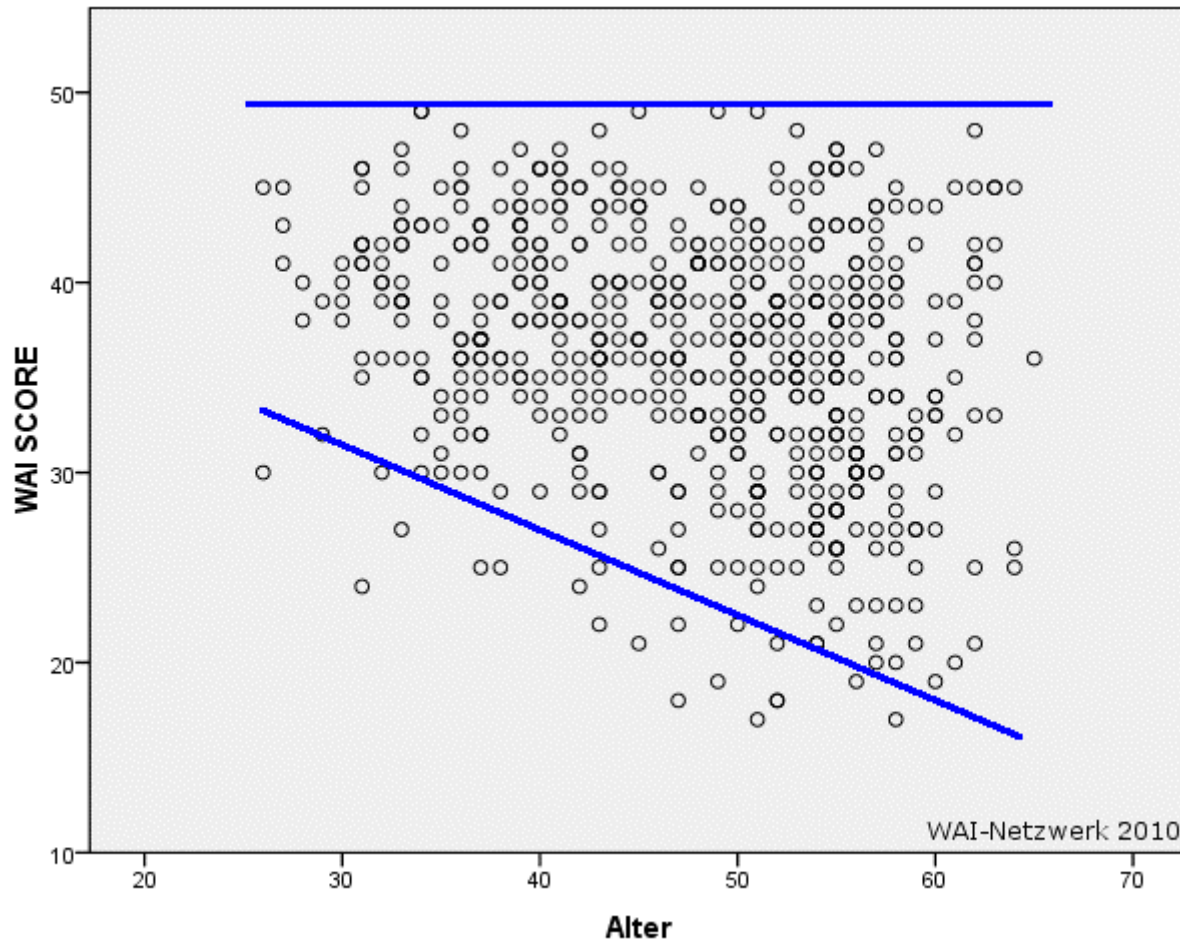
Telefon: 0202 – 439 3017

Gefördert von:

baaa:
Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz
und Arbeitsmedizin

Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit
inoa.de

Back-up

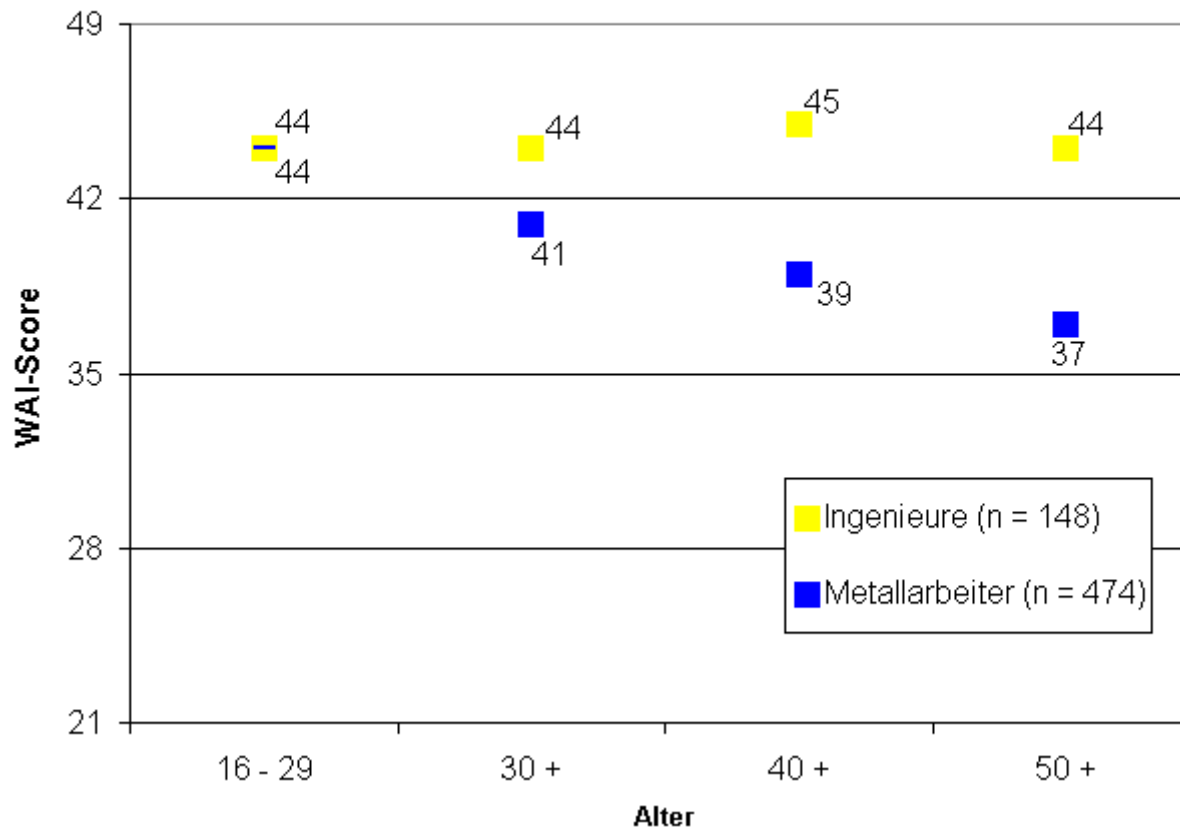


649 teacher
in germany
(2004/2005)

age: Ø 47,7
WAI: Ø 36,2

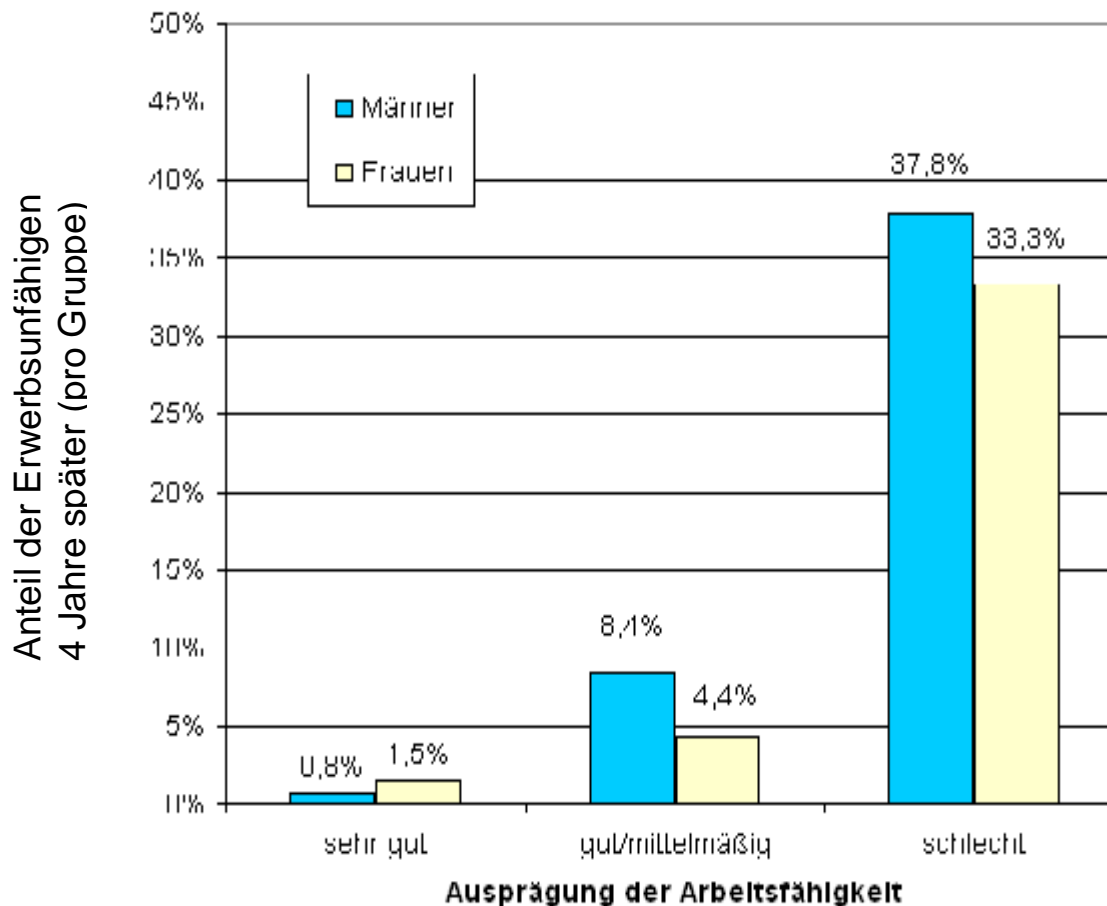
► Work Ability becomes more *heterogeneous* during life time.

Arbeitsfähigkeit in verschiedenen Berufsgruppen (4 Altersklassen)



► *Occupation* influences Work Ability.

Example: WAI-result predicts disability pension 4 years later among older employees in the municipal sector



[Tuomi & Ilmarinen, 1992]

WAI-result predicts longer sick leave (more than 9 days) during the next 12 months among younger employees (31 y)

WAI-category	Men	Women
Excellent (reference group)	1,0	1,0
good	1,9	2,0
moderate	2,0	2,4
critical	3,4	6,2

Example: Men with a „critical“ WAI have a **3,4 x higher probability** of being sick more than 9 days during the following 12 months than men with an „excellent“ WAI.