

Is the Public Aware of the American Heart Association's (AHA) Dietary Fat Recommendations and "The Facts on Fat" Infographic



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BACKGROUND

- Dietary guidelines for fat have been challenged over the years by scientific findings and media reports.
- In 2017, the AHA released an advisory statement to solidify the evidence that unsaturated fats should replace saturated fats to reduce cardiovascular disease.
- The AHA's "The Facts on Fats" infographic provides simple messaging based on the guidelines to facilitate nutrition education.
- **Despite the AHA's efforts to clarify inform and controversies surrounding dietary fat**, there is limited research about public knowledge and awareness of dietary fat guidelines and the extent to which the different types of fats influence heart disease risk.

OBJECTIVE

- We aim to investigate public
- awareness of the AHA guidelines,
 - recognition of "The Facts on Fats" infographic, and
 - knowledge and behaviors related to dietary fats and heart disease.

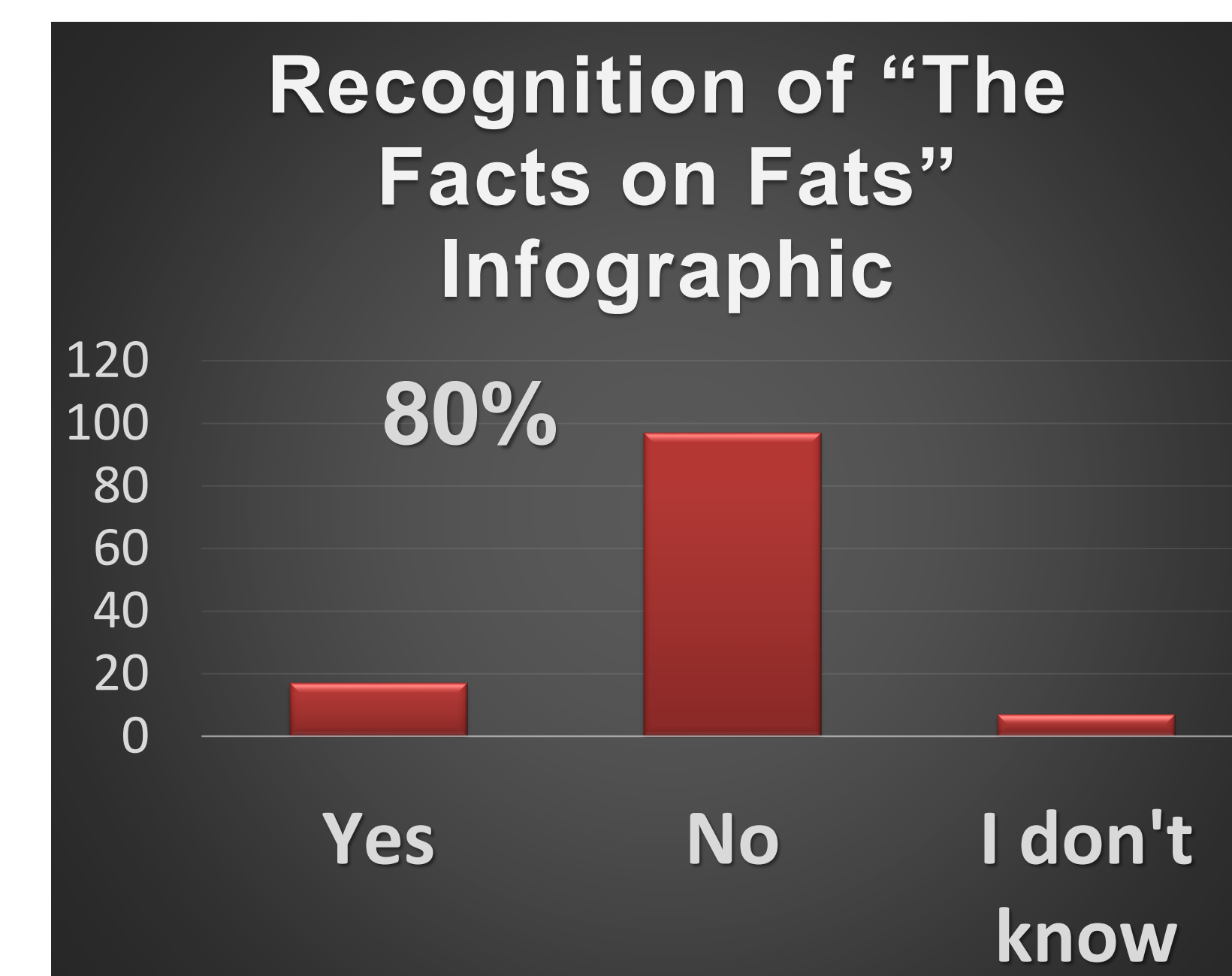
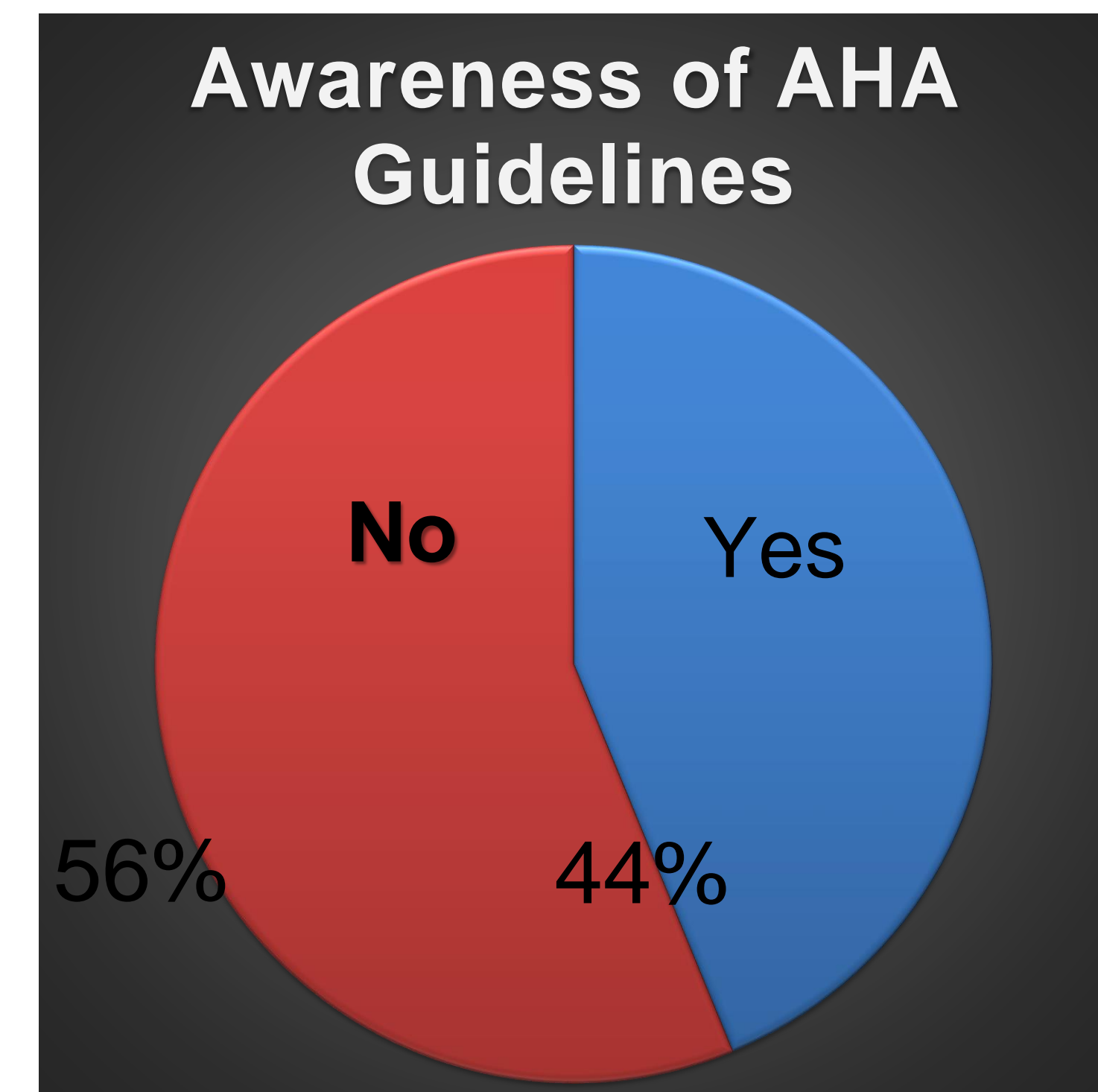


METHODS

- A convenience sample (n=121) at a university and medical center setting completed a web-based survey.
- A cumulative "knowledge" score was derived by summing responses to questions about dietary fats and heart disease based on AHA guidelines, and types of fats depicted on the infographic. Higher scores indicated greater knowledge (possible scores 0-16).
- "Healthy Eating" and "Unhealthy Eating" scores were calculated based on frequency of selecting foods that were primarily unsaturated (healthy) fats (maximum = 35) or saturated and trans (unhealthy) fats (maximum = 49), respectively.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Fifty-six percent of respondents (n=68) were not familiar with the AHA's recommendations. Figure 1.
- Only 14% of the respondents have seen infographic (n=17).
- The average knowledge, healthy eating and unhealthy eating scores were 8.17 (SD±1.00; maximum=16), 9.10 (SD±5.6) **out of 35**, and 7.66 (SD±5.34) **out of 49**, respectively.
- "Healthy" and "Unhealthy" Eating scores did not correlate with the knowledge score.
- Knowledge scores were linked to awareness of the AHA guidelines (p = .013), but not to recognition of the infographic.



CONCLUSION

- Awareness of the AHA guidelines, recognition of the infographic and knowledge scores were low.
- This study highlights the need to improve the public's understanding of the types of dietary fats and heart disease risk and perhaps increase coverage of "The Facts on Fat" infographic.

REFERENCES

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- The facts on fats. American Heart Association. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/fats/the-facts-on-fats>. Published May 2017. Accessed August 10th, 2018.