

Introduction

- The 2018 study by the Claims Conference analyzed knowledge of the Holocaust and its important figures in the U.S. general population.
 - Findings include that one-third of Americans believe that two million Jews or less were killed during the Holocaust, about 45% of Americans could not name a single concentration camp or ghetto, and 80% of Americans have never visited a Holocaust Museum (1).
- The proposed study will build on this study by including questions regarding medical personnel and physician involvement in the Holocaust.
- Studying the Holocaust and its ethical lessons is important because of the massive contribution some physicians had in carrying out Nazi policies.
 - A previous study found that 45% of German physicians joined the Nazi Party, a disproportionately large number compared with other professions (2).
- Understanding what medical students do and do not know about the Holocaust and physician involvement will show the need and desire for medical schools to incorporate Holocaust bioethics into curricula.
- Due to the educational requirements to enter medical school, I expect that medical students will have greater knowledge of the Holocaust compared to the general public.
- I expect to see a desire from medical students for learning opportunities focused on lessons that can be learned from studying the Holocaust and the medical community's involvement.

Aims and Objectives

- Create a survey focused on knowledge of the Holocaust and the medical community's involvement in it.
- Disseminate survey to current medical students.
- Analyze students' knowledge in comparison to the general population
- Analyze literature on ethical lessons that can be extracted from studying the Holocaust

Methods

An online survey was created on Qualtrics assessing general Holocaust knowledge using questions from the 2019 Claims study. It was adapted and questions focused on medical personnel and events that occurred leading up to and during the Holocaust were added

- All participants in this study are medical students attending Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine and included M1 through M4 students. The survey was distributed via the OUWB student listserv. The survey remained open for several months. A total of 54 participants completed the survey.

Results

- Among the sample, 56.6% (n=9) of participants were between the ages of 21 and 23, 56.6% (n=30) were 24-26 years of age, 20.8% (n=11) were 27-29. And 5.7% (n=3) were over 30 years old (1 individual did not answer that question). 58.8% (n=30) identified as Female, while 41.2% (n=21) identified as Male (3 individuals did not answer that question).

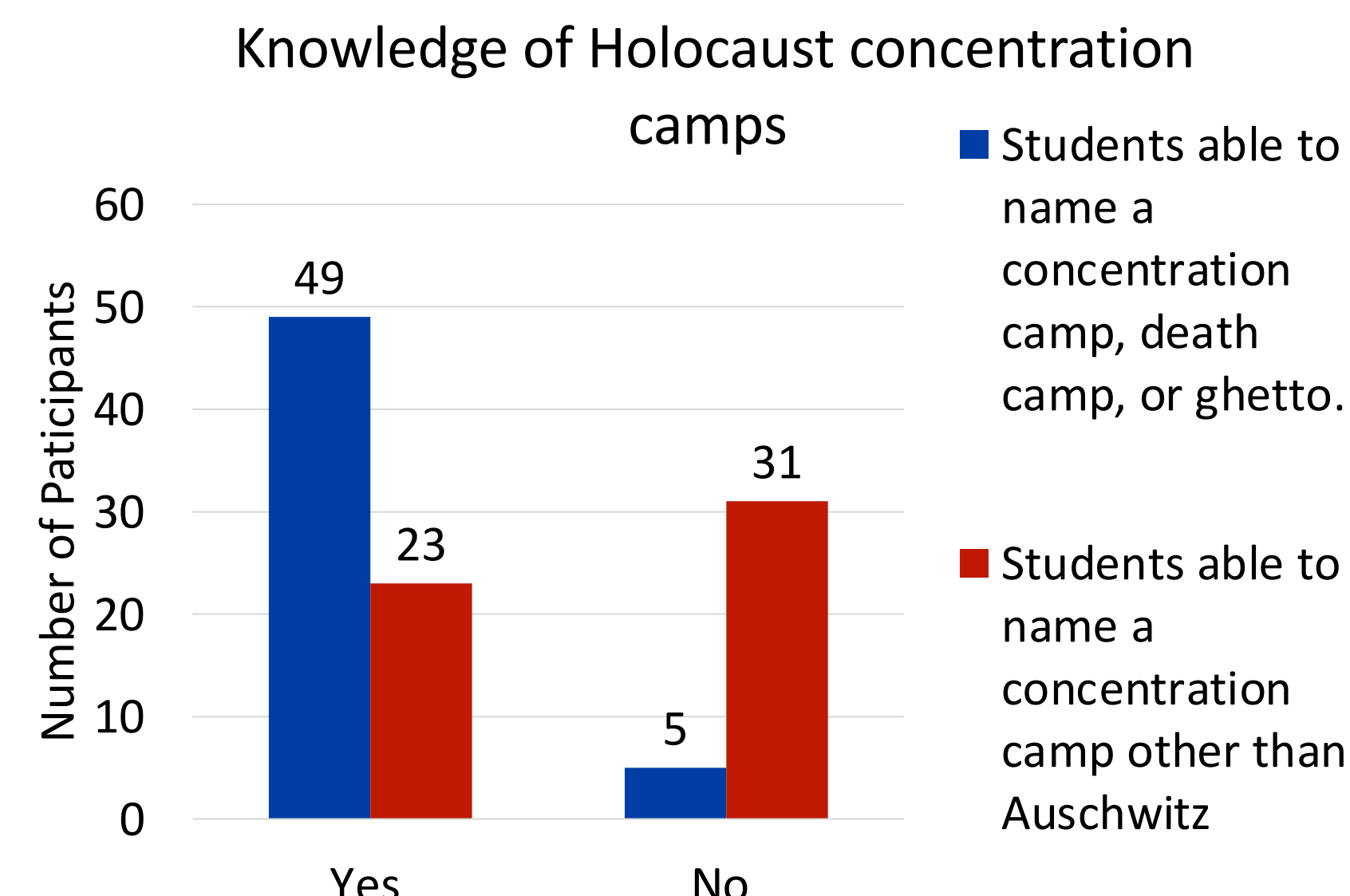


Figure 1. Medical students were significantly more likely to be able to name a single concentration camp (91%, $z=5.279$; $p<0.001$) than the general population (55%) though only 43% could name one other than Auschwitz.

It is important for medical students to study physicians that resisted against the Nazis.

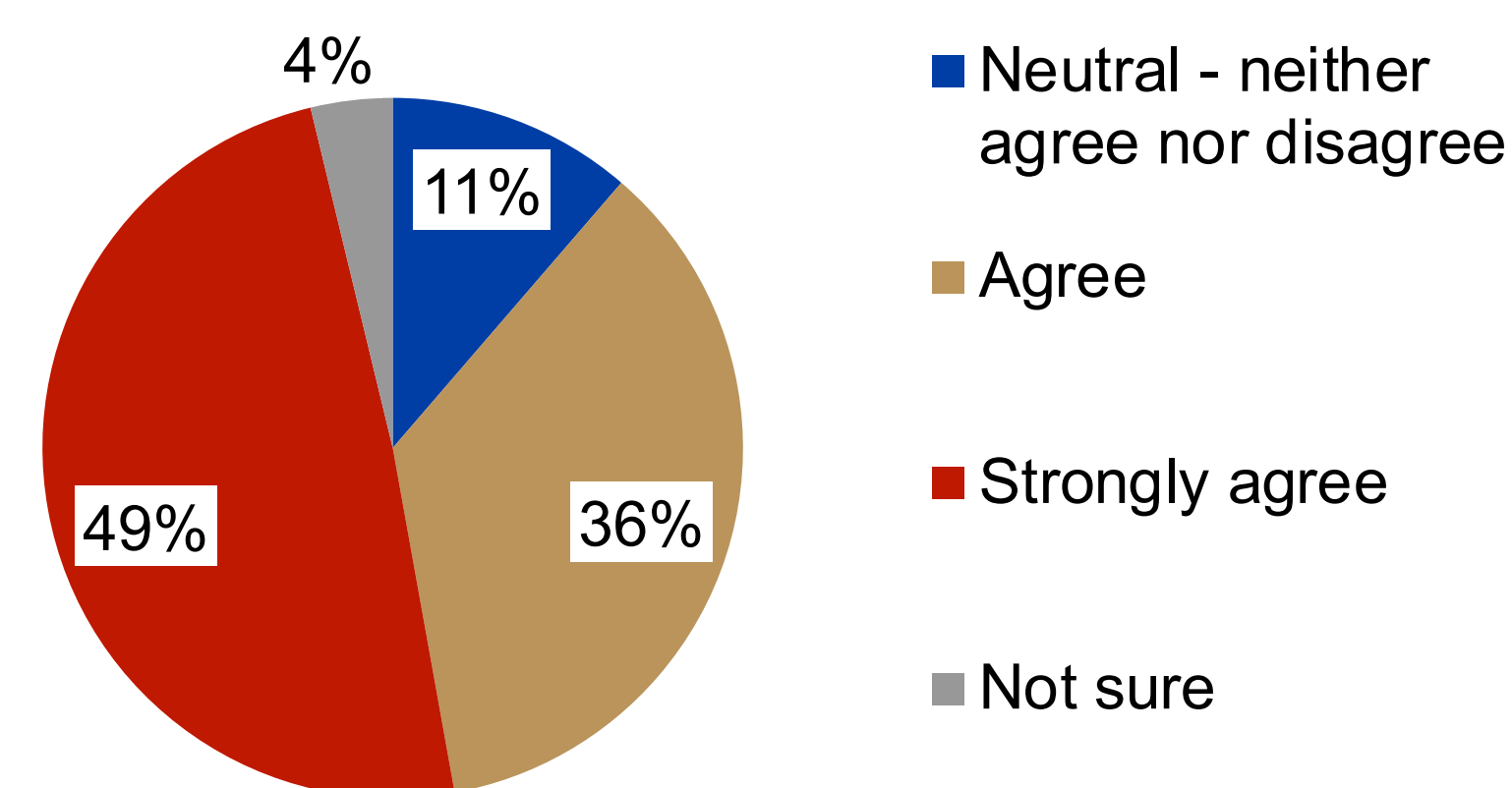


Figure 2. When asked to agree or disagree with the above statement, 49.1% (n=26) of those sampled strongly agreed and 35.8% (n=19) agreed that it is important for medical students to study physicians that resisted against the Nazis, 11.3% (n=6) said they were neutral, and 3.8% (n=2) were not sure (1 individual did not answer the question).

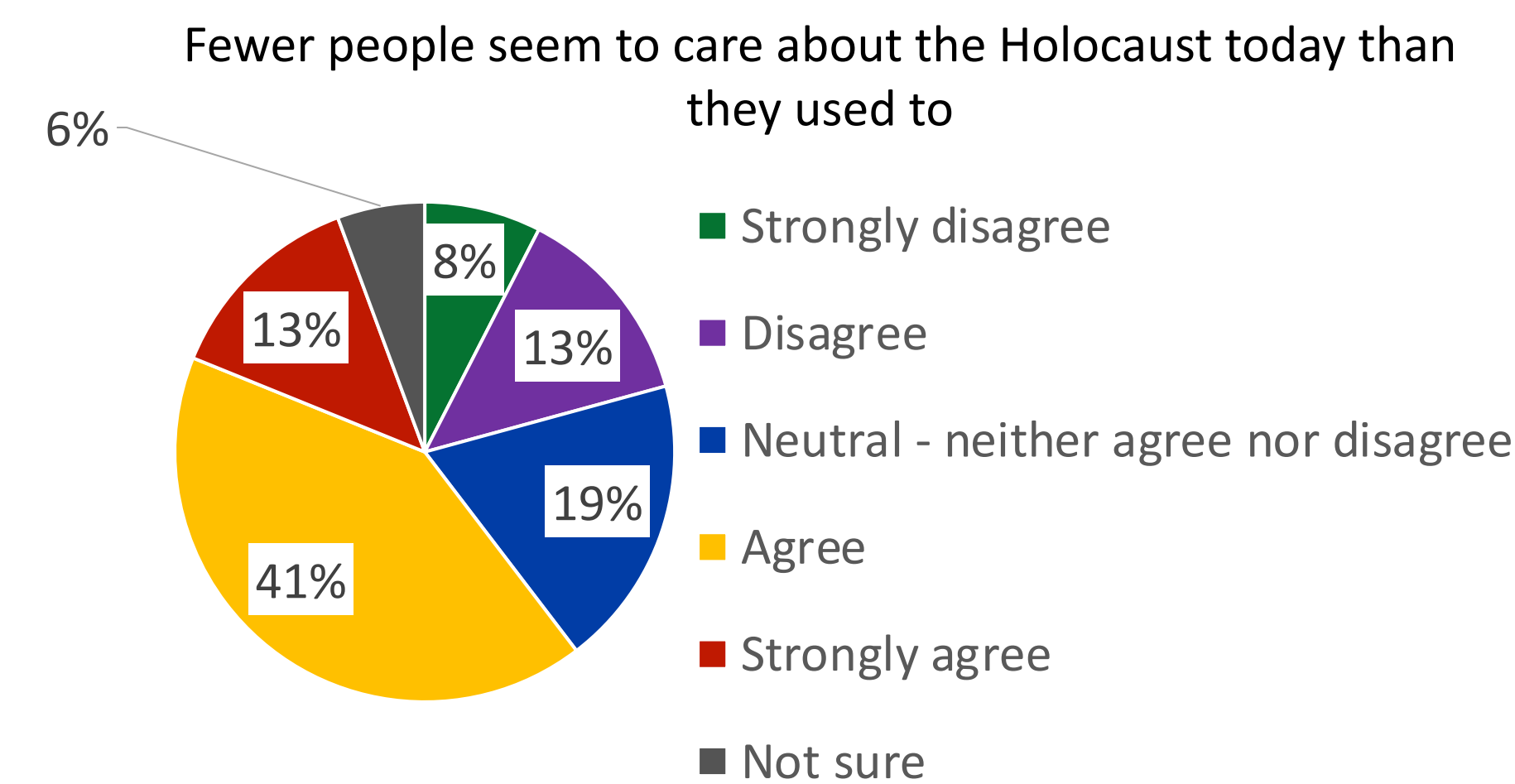


Figure 3. Though not statistically significant, the medical students sampled were less likely to agree or strongly agree that fewer people seem to care about the Holocaust today (54.7%, $z=-2.428$; $p > 0.05$) than the general population (70%).

Have you personally, or has anyone you know visited a Holocaust museum in the United States?

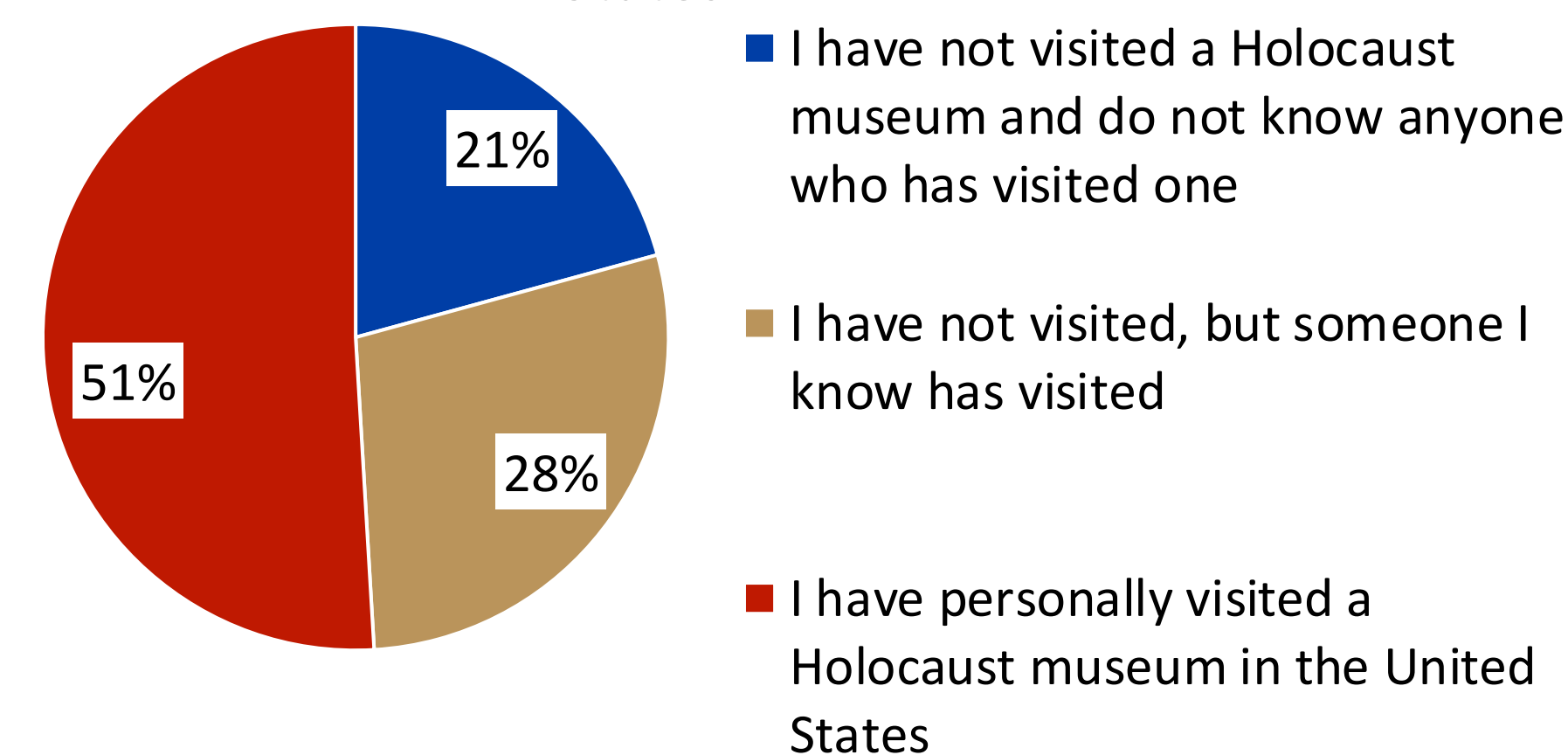


Figure 4. The medical students sampled were found to be significantly more likely to have visited a Holocaust museum (51%, $z=5.632$; $p<0.001$) than the general population (20%)

How would you like to learn about the Holocaust and its medical implications during medical school?

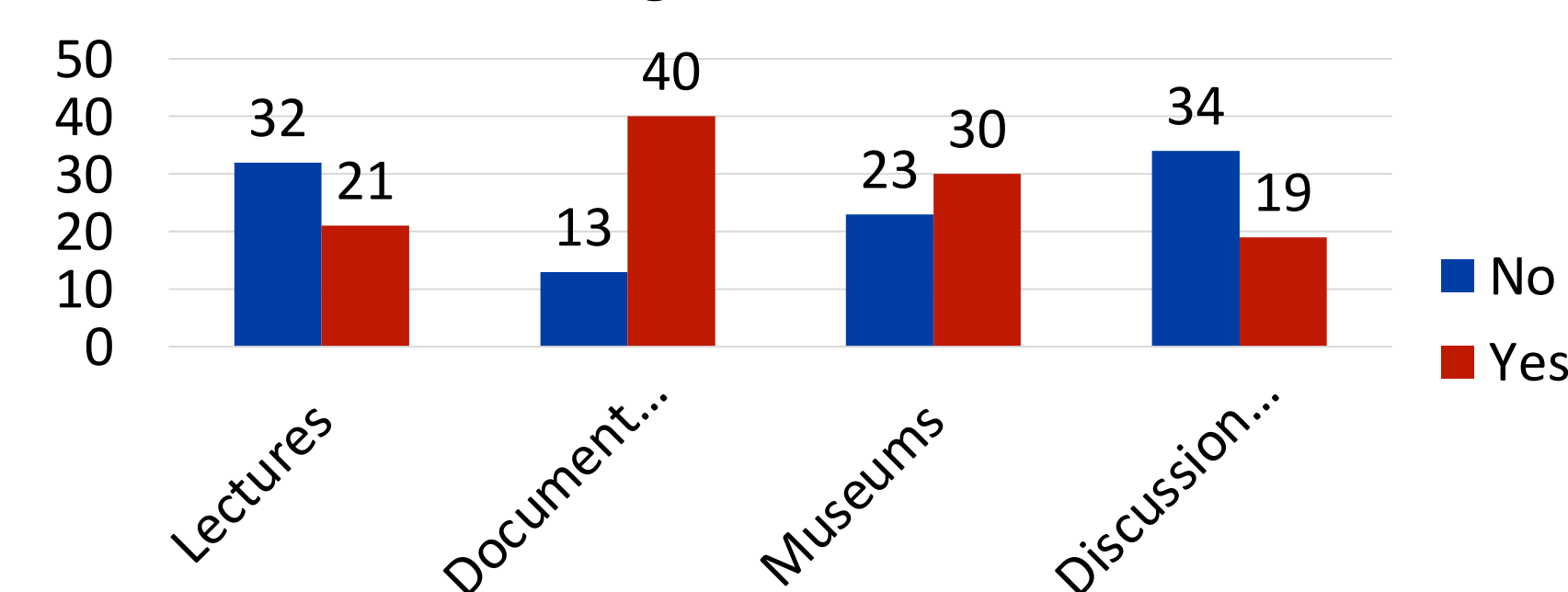


Figure 5. When asked which methods they would like to learn about the Holocaust, 38.9% (n=21) said yes to lectures, 74.1% (n=40) said yes to films/documentaries, 55.6% (n=30) said yes to museums, and 35.2% (n=19) said yes to discussion groups.

Conclusions

Physicians played a critical role for Hitler in Nazi Germany and if something similar were to occur again physicians would most definitely have a role to play. The results from this study support that medical students have greater knowledge of the Holocaust than the general population. Students could more accurately describe the number of Jews killed during the holocaust and could more often name concentration camps. This is most likely due to education requirements for medical school. While the students sampled did have more broad knowledge, it is still concerning that 42.6% could not name a concentration camp other than Auschwitz and 84.9% believe that the Holocaust could happen again, demonstrating the importance of helping medical students develop strong professional identities.

Ethics and clinical practice are intertwined as every clinical interaction has some moral component involved (3). The ability to reflexively incorporate principles such as beneficence and justice into clinical practice is a critical part of medical training. In most medical schools, ethics is taught throughout the preclinical years and clinical applications are scarce (4). Incorporating Holocaust studies into medical school ethics education can help students develop a strong professional identity by introducing physicians during the Holocaust that exemplified a strong moral and professional identity in the face of moral distress (5). Students also demonstrated how they would like to develop these skills, through more interactive and visual experiences like films, documentaries, and museums. In the future, studies should be done to assess the qualitative experiences, lessons, and principles that medical students can draw from instruction on the Holocaust and the ethics involved.

References

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