

Background

Providing education and support for caregivers of cancer patients improves physical, psychosocial, and quality of life outcomes for both caregivers and patients.[1] As the use of immunotherapy continues to expand, it is important that caregivers have access to education and community resources to support their loved ones in making informed decisions, recognizing side effects, and getting optimal care.

This analysis explores gains from Cancer Support Community's Frankly Speaking about Cancer (FSAC): Immunotherapy, a national evidence-based educational program created for people diagnosed with cancer and their caregivers.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer Program

- The *Frankly Speaking About Cancer* (FSAC) series provides in-depth coverage of topics relevant to those affected by cancer. Topics covered include: clinical trials, cancer treatments and side effects and coping with the cost of care.



- Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Your Immune System & Cancer Treatment* provides information about immunotherapy as a treatment option, including how immunotherapy works, how to cope with the delayed response to treatment that is characteristic of some immunotherapy drugs, and the different side effects that people encounter while taking these treatments.

Goal

Assess cancer caregivers' educational and empowerment outcomes of an in-person psychoeducational workshop focused on immunotherapy.

Methods

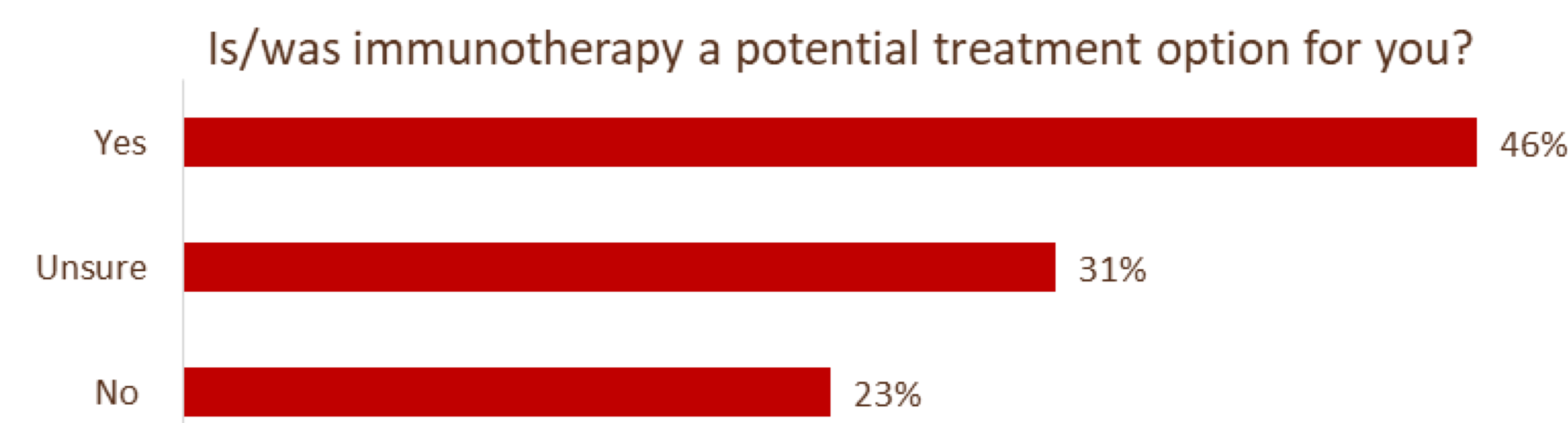
- Between 2014-2018, 1,232 adults attending FSAC: Immunotherapy psychoeducational workshops nationwide from 2014-2018 completed a post-workshop survey.
- Participants came from CSC's nationwide affiliate network and were given the opportunity to complete a workshop evaluation at the end of the 2-hour program (89% response rate).
- The evaluation assessed knowledge and program outcomes, including workshop satisfaction, in addition to demographics. Survey questions also focused on how caregivers met their informational and assistance needs in regard to immunotherapy.
- Participants rated their pre and post-workshop immunotherapy knowledge ("How knowledgeable were/are you about immunotherapy before/after this workshop?" 1= Not at all, 5= Very much) as well as their level of confidence speaking to their doctor ("Before/After this workshop I spoke with/feel more confident in speaking with my doctor about immunotherapy." 1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree).
- Descriptive analyses and ANOVAs were used to assess caregivers characteristics, experience with immunotherapy and workshop outcomes.

Results

Participants Characteristics

- 23% of respondents were non-professional caregivers; the remainder included cancer patients (66%), health care professionals (8%), and others (3%).
- This analysis focuses on 283 non-professional caregivers who self-reported background characteristics and workshop-specific outcomes (81% response rate).
- Of the 282 caregivers, 54% were spouses/partners, 31% family, and 15% friends.
- Caregivers were primarily White (72%) and female (70%); average age was 55 (s.d.= 17.6 years; range: 19-85 years).

Immunotherapy as a treatment option

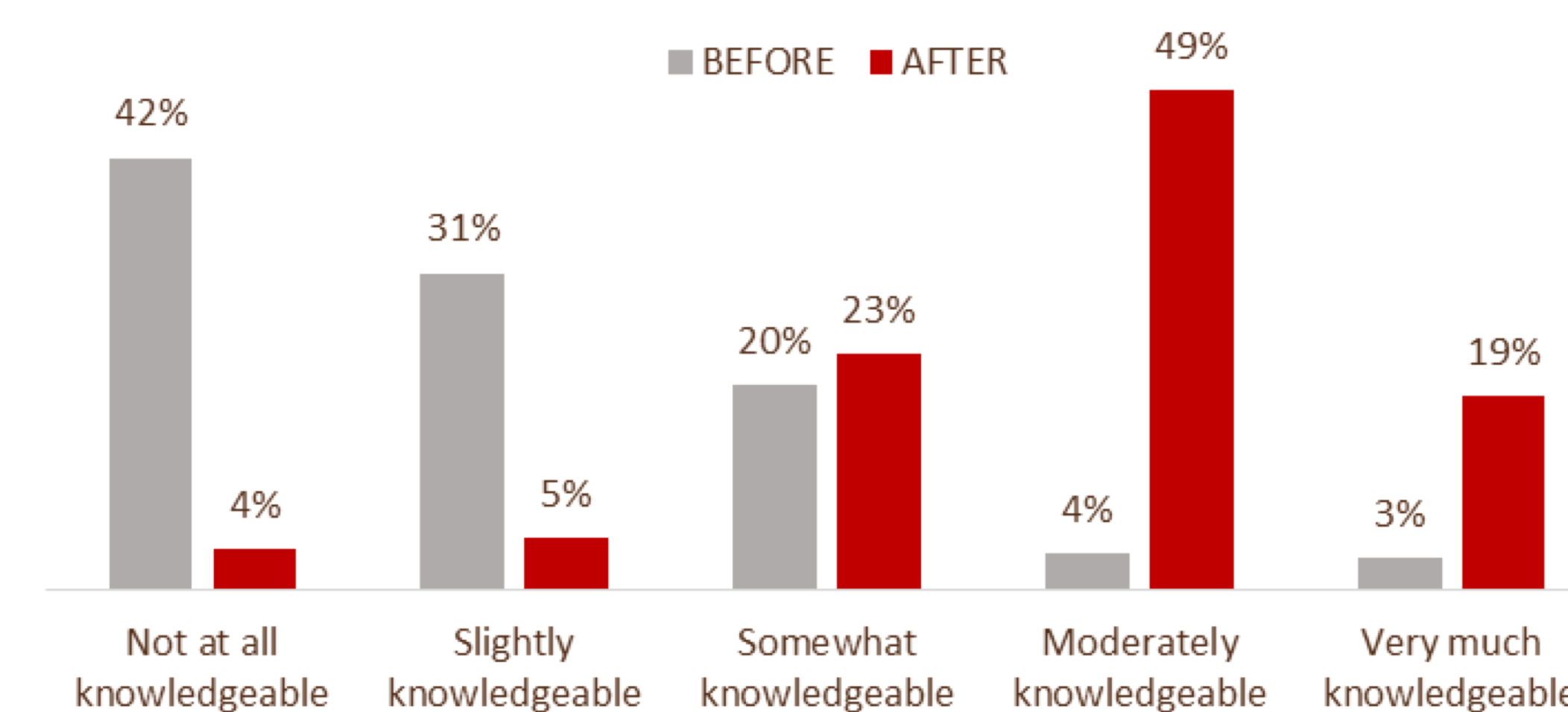


- 46% reported that immunotherapy was a treatment option for their loved one, and 11% reported that the person they care for have undergone or was undergoing immunotherapy.
- Only 9% reported speaking with their doctor about immunotherapy and its potential side effects.

Workshop-Related Outcomes

Gains in knowledge

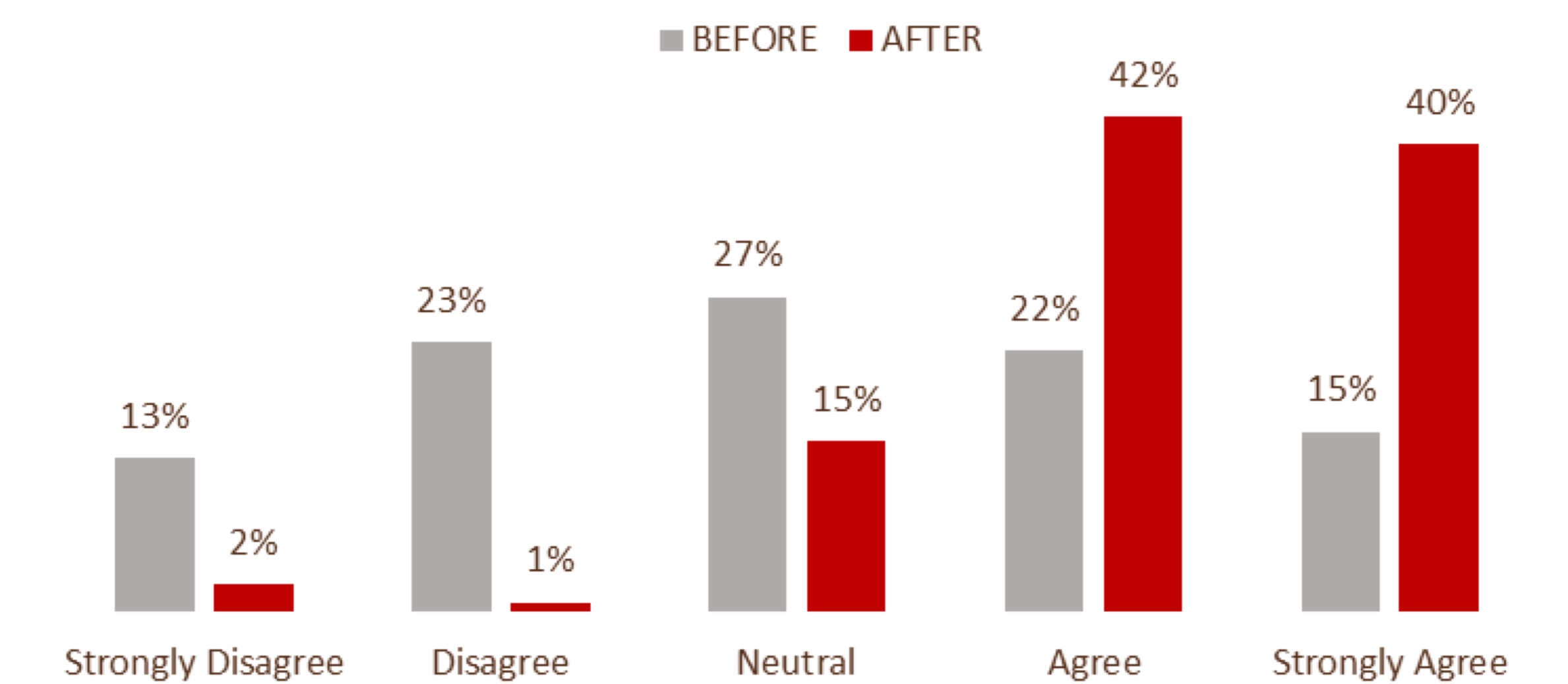
How knowledgeable were you about immunotherapy BEFORE/AFTER this workshop?



- Post-workshop, 68% caregivers reported 'high' or 'very high' immunotherapy knowledge vs. pre-workshop (7%).
- The difference in perceived knowledge before and after attending the workshop is statistically significant ($t(210)=24.05, p<.01$).

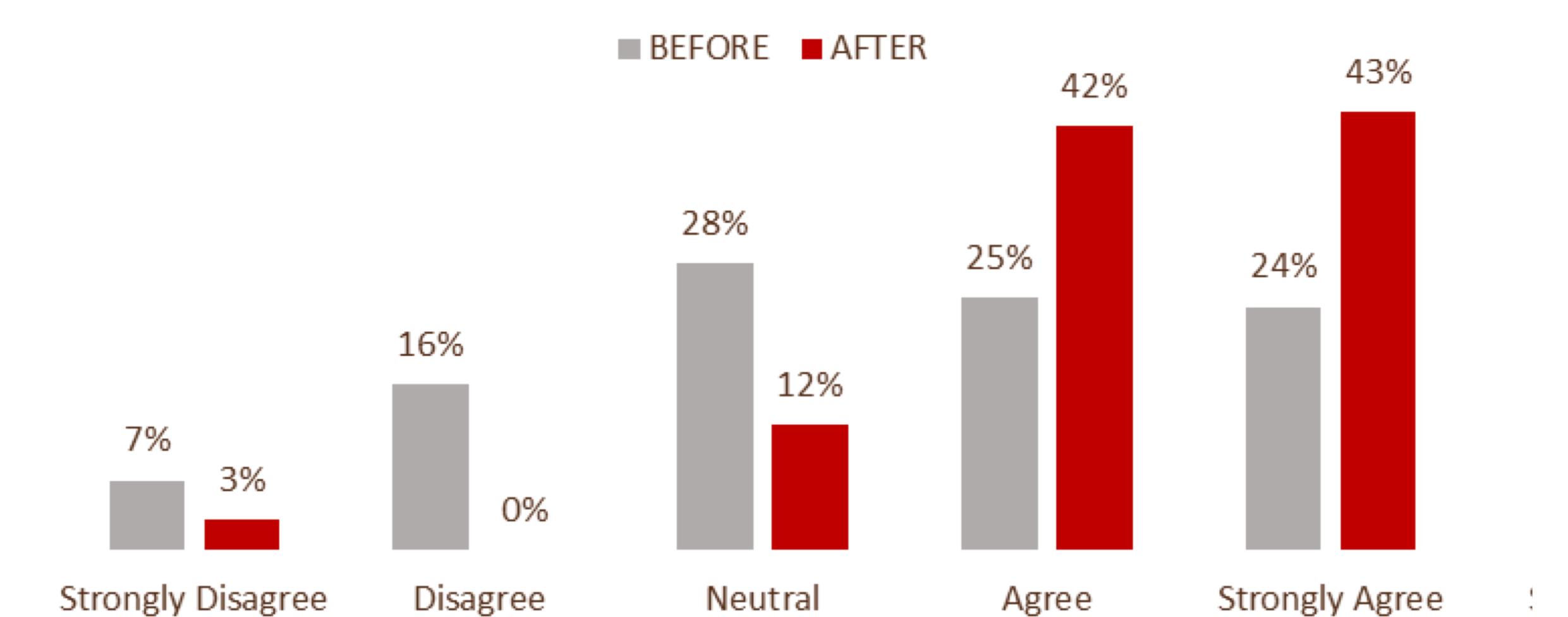
Gains in confidence

I feel confident about searching for information on immunotherapy



- 82% of caregivers reported feeling more confident about searching for information on immunotherapy post-workshop vs. 32% pre-workshop ($t(98)=8.9, p<.01$).

I feel confident about speaking with my doctor about immunotherapy treatment and it's side effects



- Caregivers reported an increase in confidence in discussing with their health care team about immunotherapy as a treatment option, with 71% reporting confidence (agree/strongly agree) in speaking to their doctor about immunotherapy post-workshop vs. 24% pre-workshop ($t(83)=5.8, p<.01$).

Conclusions

Findings suggest that the FSAC: Immunotherapy program increases caregivers' perceived knowledge about immunotherapy and their professed confidence in talking to their doctor about immunotherapy. Our results highlight the potential benefits of immunotherapy education and support for cancer caregivers.

References

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- Harvey A, Amsellem M, Suarez R. Information and emotional support utilization among cancer caregivers: results from a national sample of education program attendees. *Psycho-Oncology* 2015;24(Suppl. 2):160.
- Saxton C, Amsellem M, Suarez R. Caregiver participation in a psychoeducational cancer support program: results from a national sample. *J Canc Educ* 2016;31(Suppl 1).