

## Background

- People increasingly use online platforms to access information; healthcare information is no exception.<sup>1</sup>
- Majority of people who seek information online do so weekly and believe themselves to be successful in finding their answers online.<sup>2</sup>
- Information presented online can be unfiltered, misrepresented and interpreted incorrectly by viewers. Patients can be influenced by this information and ultimately may impact their healthcare decisions.<sup>3</sup>
- Understanding the patient population and their behaviors can be helpful in assessing need for community level interventions.<sup>4</sup>

## Purpose

- To investigate the effect of parental online engagement as it relates to their child's healthcare needs

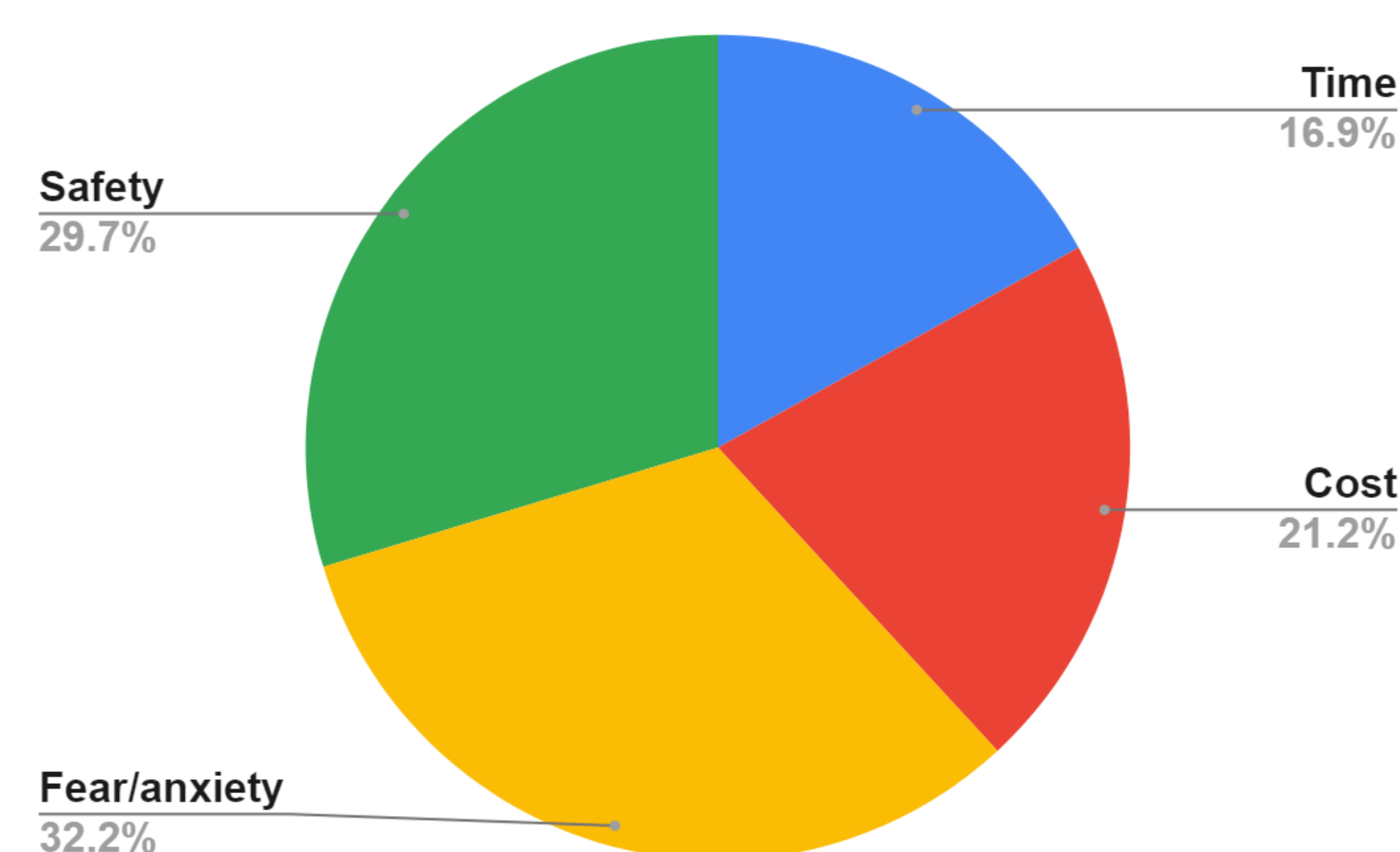
## Methods

- Parents of pediatric patients of Penn Dental Pediatric Department were randomly selected to participate in an anonymous, online survey that was accessible via QR code.
- The survey consisted of 24 multiple choice questions in English.
- Responses were excluded if English was selected as a non-native language and if survey responses were incomplete.
- 98 total responses recorded, 74 responses utilized in data analysis.
- Data collection ran from August 2024 to January 2025.
- Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey responses.

## Results

Figure 1.

### Top Concerns Regarding Dental Treatment



## Results

Figure 2.

### Parents' Understanding Regarding Health Information

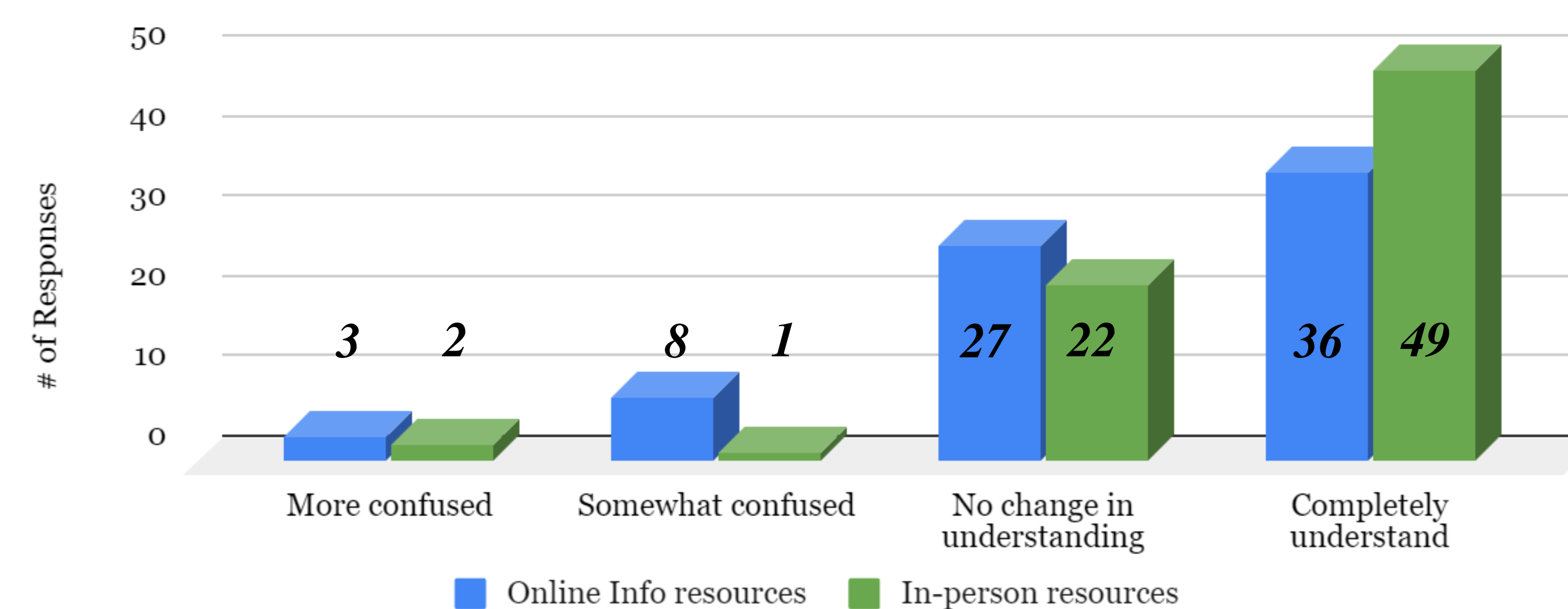


Figure 3.

### Do you bring up new info to the dentist?

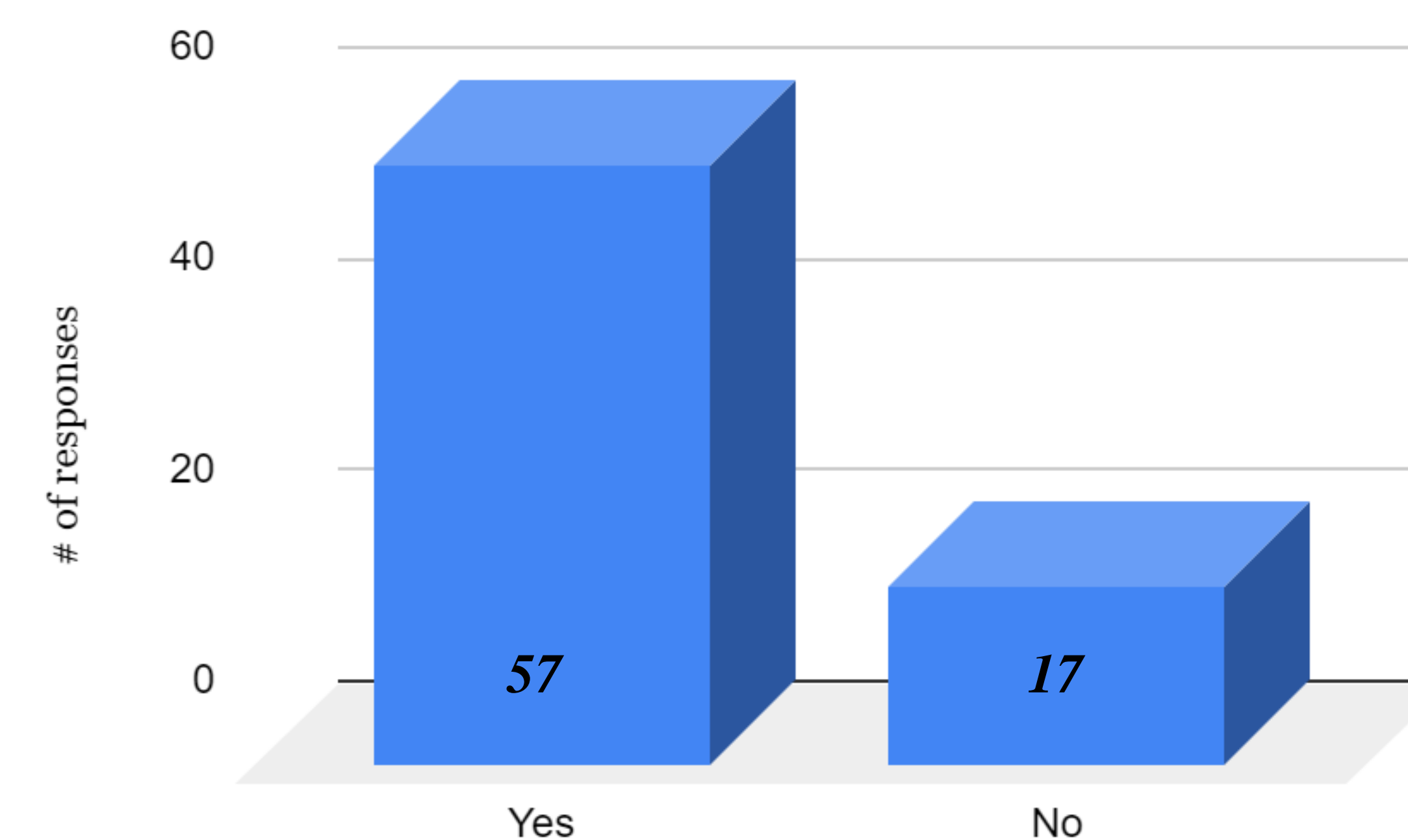
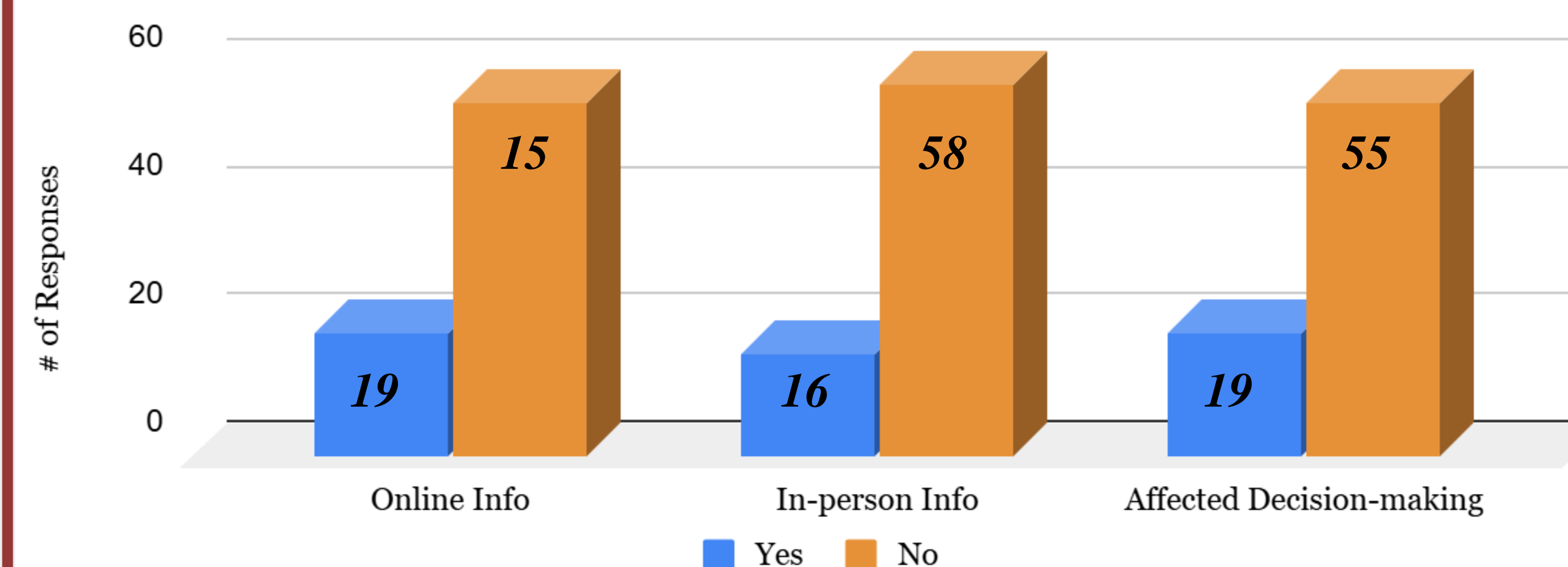


Figure 4.

### Parents' Hesitation Related to Resources



## Results Summary

- The top concerns of parents regarding dental treatment are fear/anxiety
- More parents reported better understanding and less confusion with dental information from in-person sources compared to online sources.
- Over 77% of parents report telling dentist about information from online sources.
- About 20-25% of parents report hesitation with accepting dental treatment regardless if information was learned in-person or online.
- About 25% of report that accessing health information online has affected their decision to follow professional recommendations regarding healthcare treatment.

## Conclusions

- Whether engagement is online or in-person, confusion with health information exists.
- Confusion was more likely to happen accessing health information online compared to accessing information in-person. This is presumably due to the ability of the provider to clarify the new information and the ability of the parent to ask questions.
- The rate of following treatment plans was not impacted by parental access to online or in-person sources and those found to be skeptical of health information were found to be consistently hesitant across medical and dental treatments.<sup>4</sup>
- The frequency of online health seeking underscores the importance of having in-person conversations with patients to help elucidate information.
- Greater patient access to health information can create empowered patients and overall, a more collaborative healthcare relationship.

## Limitation and Future Directions

- Limitations of this study includes a limited sample size, broad line of questioning within the survey and that our population sample was limited to one clinic.
- Future directions includes survey questions that is specific to dental treatments or modalities.
- Survey design could include longitudinal studies to assess parental decision making over time as their child healthcare situations change.

## References

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