

Best Practices for a Successful Virtual Food Demonstration



Leigh Ann Bullington, MS., Keith A. Statham-Cleek, MEd., Kerry Rodtnick, BA., Ricky Blair, BA., & Bryan Mader, DrPH, MPH, CHES

University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, Research & Extension

Introduction

The program delivers training for creating a virtual food demonstration with an eye toward food safety precautions. Drawing on evidence from the 2017 FDA Food Code, the program trains participants to shift a once in-person event to a virtual space for mastering strategies to deliver a successful virtual food demonstration.

This presentation delivers an in-depth look at performing a virtual food demonstration through a food safety lens. With an increase in the number of individuals handling, preparing, and cooking food, the ability of a food demonstration to be versatile, virtual, and evidence-based is a promising step for ensuring the safety of our food and the health of all Arkansans.

The food safety and hygiene best practices are drawn from the *FDA Food Code 2017*. The *Food Code* offers a model for protecting the public's health and provides a system for addressing the safety and protection of food prepared both in the home and out. As the structure of the virtual landscape of health education changes at rapid speed, so too should the way we approach the delivery of food safety, food handling, and hygiene information. This presentation accomplishes that goal by giving public health personnel and health educators the tools necessary to ensure that audience members come away from the training with both an increased understanding of food safety and hygiene, and a better understanding of the equipment, ingredients, cultural appropriateness, and cost-effectiveness that is important to a successful demonstration.

Our training combines the expertise of county Cooperative Extension educators, state-level educators and specialists, and audio and visual experts, whose collaboration and cooperation provide a high-quality resource for anyone looking to improve their understanding of food safety.

Learning Objectives

- A) Session participants will be able to identify the basics of food safety, including personal hygiene practices, preventing cross-contamination, time and temperature, and cleaning and sanitizing.
- A) Session participants will be able to identify cost-effective equipment, easy-to-find ingredients, reliable sources for recipes, and easily understood food preparation techniques.
- A) Session participants will be able to demonstrate best practices for a virtual food demonstration, including food safety best practices, best practices for proper audio and visual equipment, best practices for audience engagement, and best practices for creating a food dish with proper techniques.

Methodology

Two demonstration trainings—one in September and one in October 2020—brought together Extension county educators to assess and train these professionals on food safety components such as personal hygiene practices, preventing cross-contamination, cooking time and temperature, proper cleaning and sanitizing. Training topics also included setting up audio and visual equipment for the audience, including camera angles, proper lighting, high-quality microphones, and the importance of a high-speed internet connection. Also discussed was the importance of audience engagement and why branding, the elimination of on-camera (and off-camera) distractions, not letting the audience see your back, and using culturally appropriate recipes with your audience are such important components of a successful virtual food demonstration. Finally, appropriate kitchen equipment, techniques, and resources used for a virtual food demonstration were discussed and topics included cost-effective and easily accessible equipment, easy-to-find ingredients, using reliable sources for recipes, and utilizing easily understood food preparation techniques.

Our target audience included health educators, Cooperative Extension personnel, farmers' market managers, professional foodservice staff, early childhood education staff, food banks/pantries, community stakeholder groups.

Results

Across two training sessions, a total of 42 attendees were trained to deliver virtual food demonstrations to their audiences. Of those who attended, 32 (76%) participated in the pre/post course evaluation which assessed level of knowledge about the various training components. Across both demonstration trainings, a total of 42 professionals attended. Of those who attended, 32 (76%) participated in the pre/post evaluation which assessed levels of knowledge for various components of the demonstration. Our evaluation of the program resulted in increases in levels of knowledge for all 33 of the demonstration components among all attendees. Most notably, 96% of participants rated their level of knowledge as *Expert Proficiency* or *Advanced Proficiency* after the training, compared to just 26% of participants prior to training (See Table 1). After training, more participants reported a higher level of knowledge of personal hygiene practices, with 81% indicating *Expert Proficiency*, compared to just 56% before training occurred (See Table 2). Training participants also reported an increase in their level of knowledge for audio/visual components. In particular, 76% reported that their level of knowledge of proper camera angles reached *Expert Proficiency* (52%) or *Advanced Proficiency* (24%) as a result of the training (See Table 3). This is in comparison to just 15% of reported participants prior to training. Looking to the audience engagement components of the training, 86% of participants increased their level of knowledge of the use of culturally appropriate recipes for their audience to either *Advanced Proficiency* (29%) or *Expert Proficiency* (57%) (See Table 4). This is compared to just 22% of the audience reporting *Advanced Proficiency* (15%) or *Expert Proficiency* (7%) before the training. Finally, the use of appropriate resources was assessed, and 100% of evaluation respondents reported increasing their level of knowledge related to using easy-to-find ingredients for their audiences, with 86% reporting *Expert Proficiency* and 14% reporting *Advanced Proficiency* after training (See Table 5), compared with just 48% and 37% prior to training, respectively.

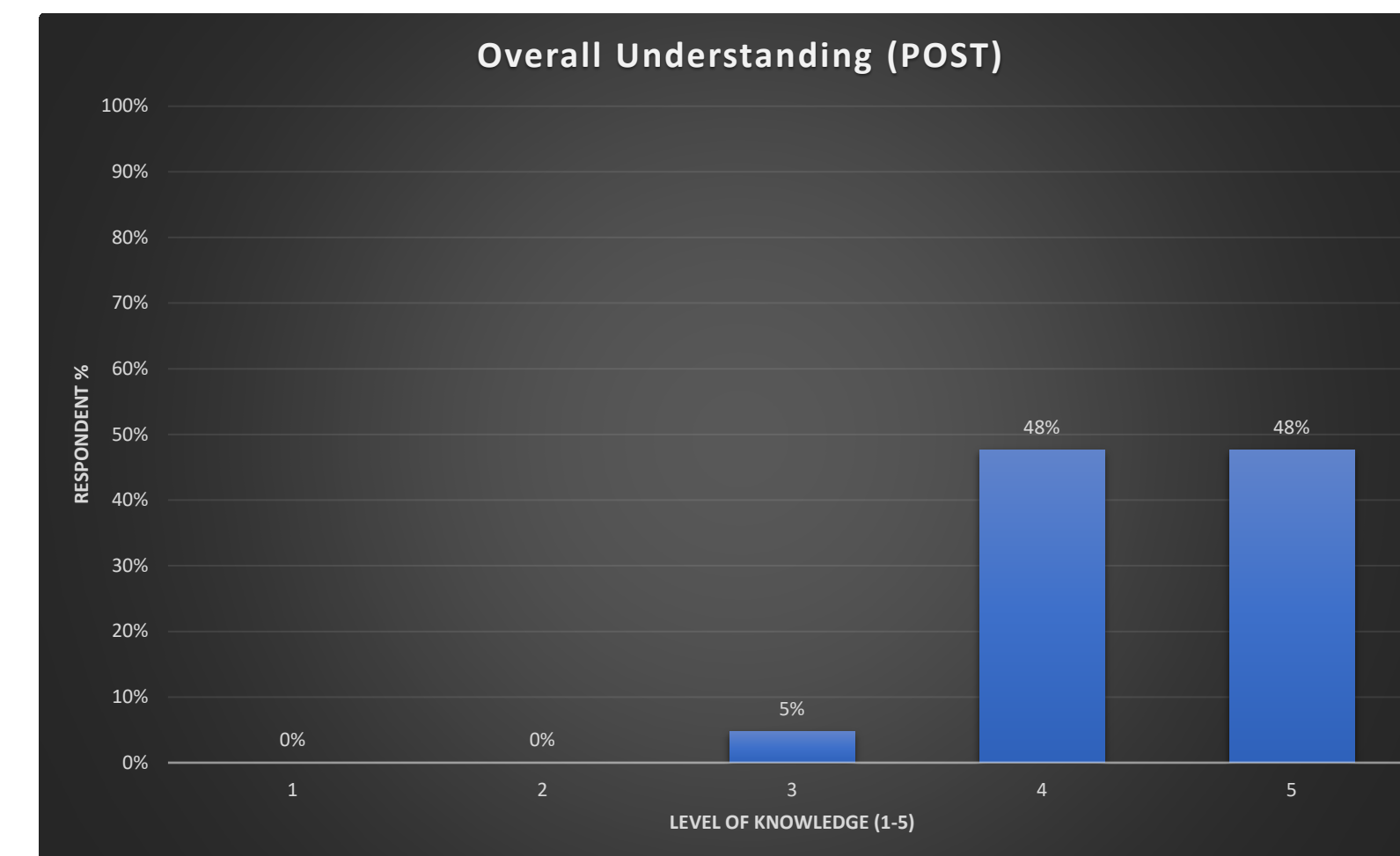


Table 1

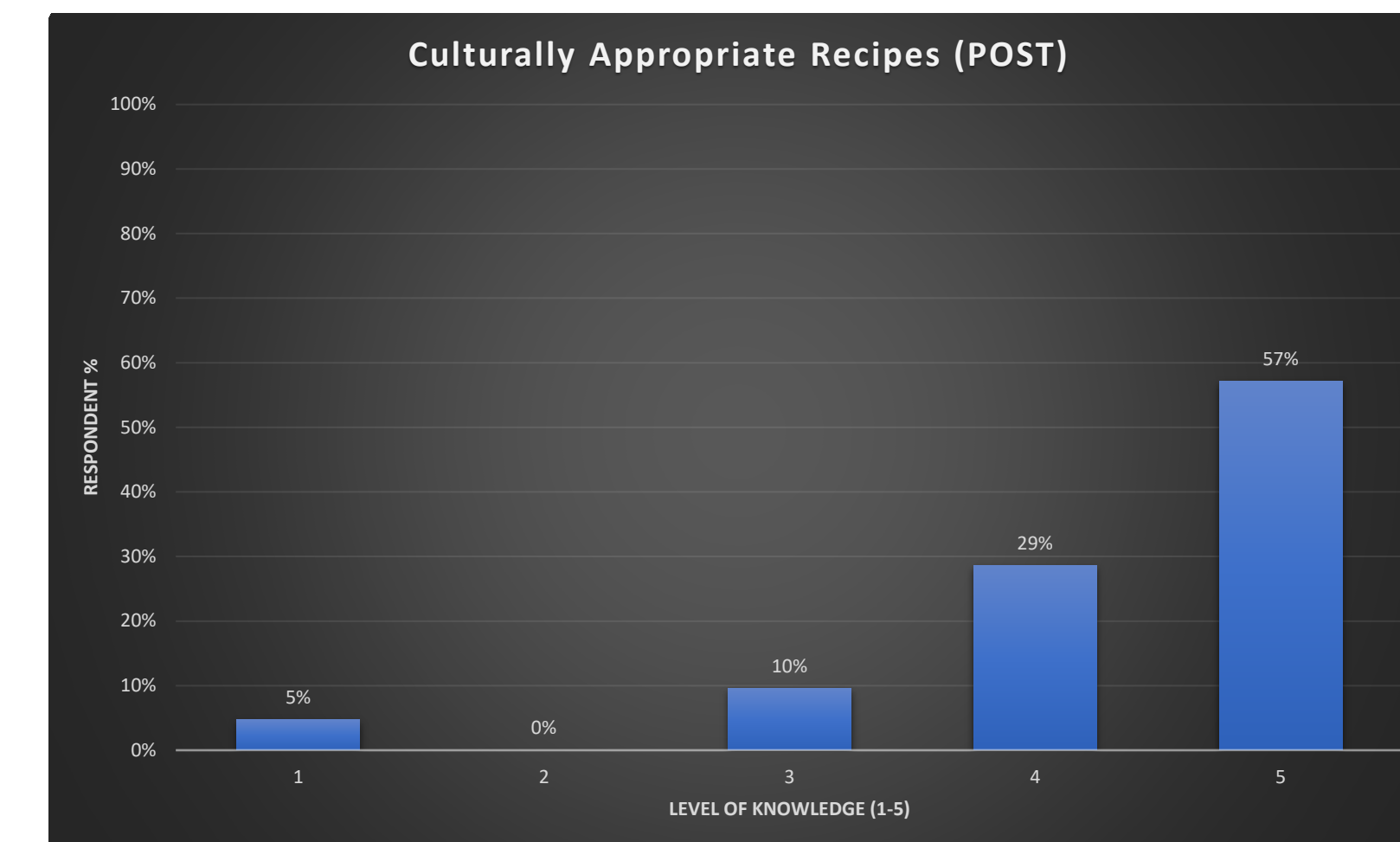


Table 4

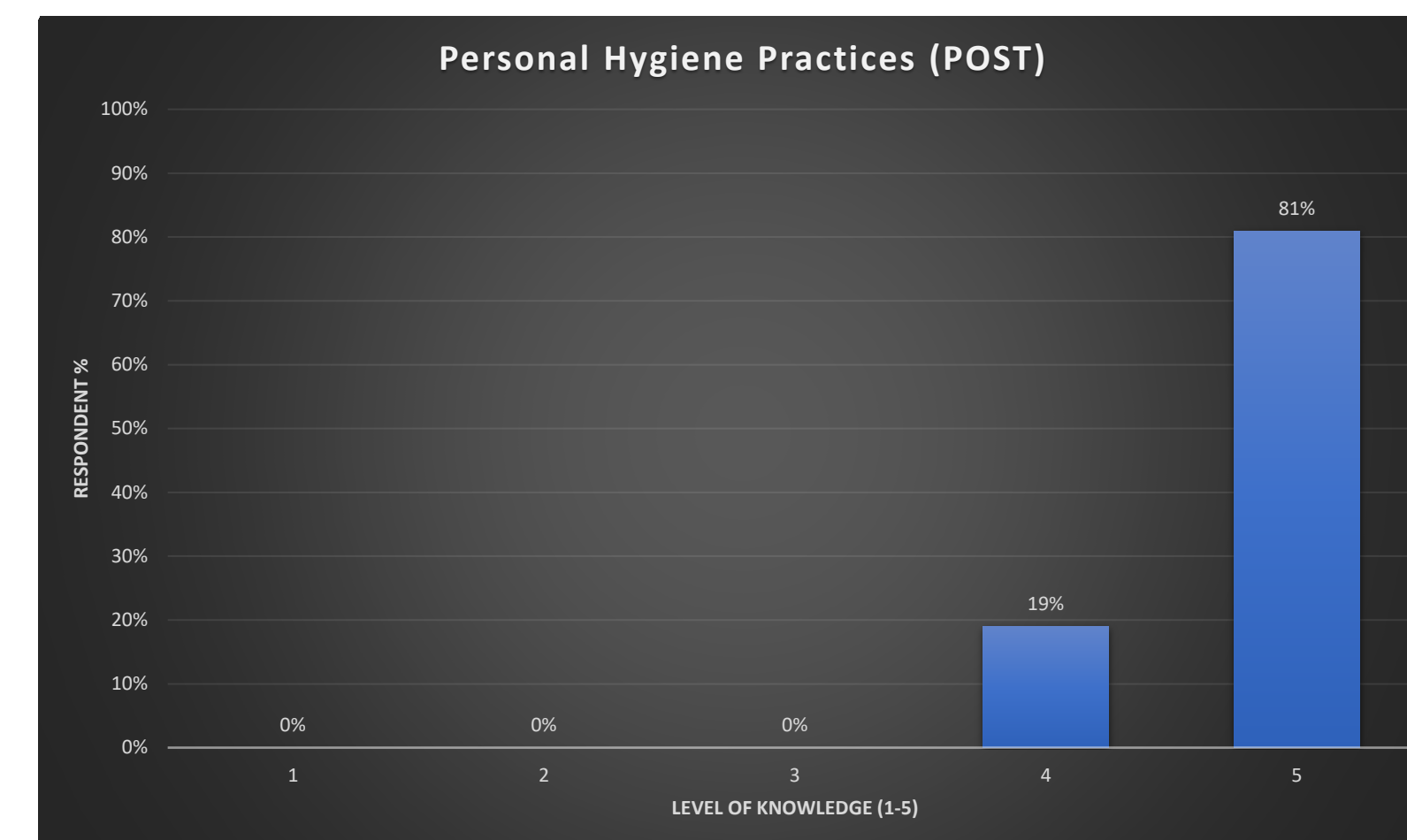


Table 2

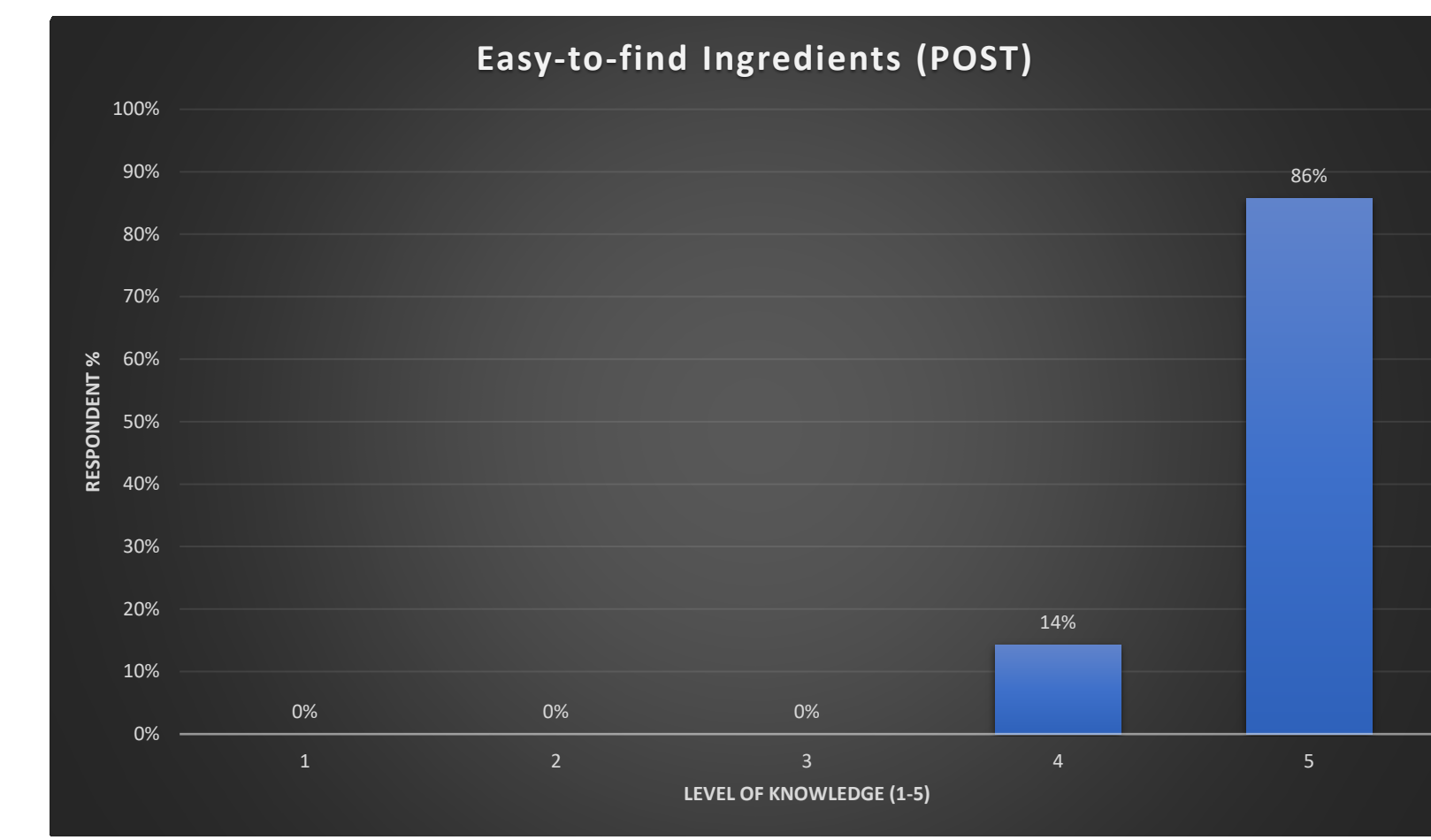


Table 5

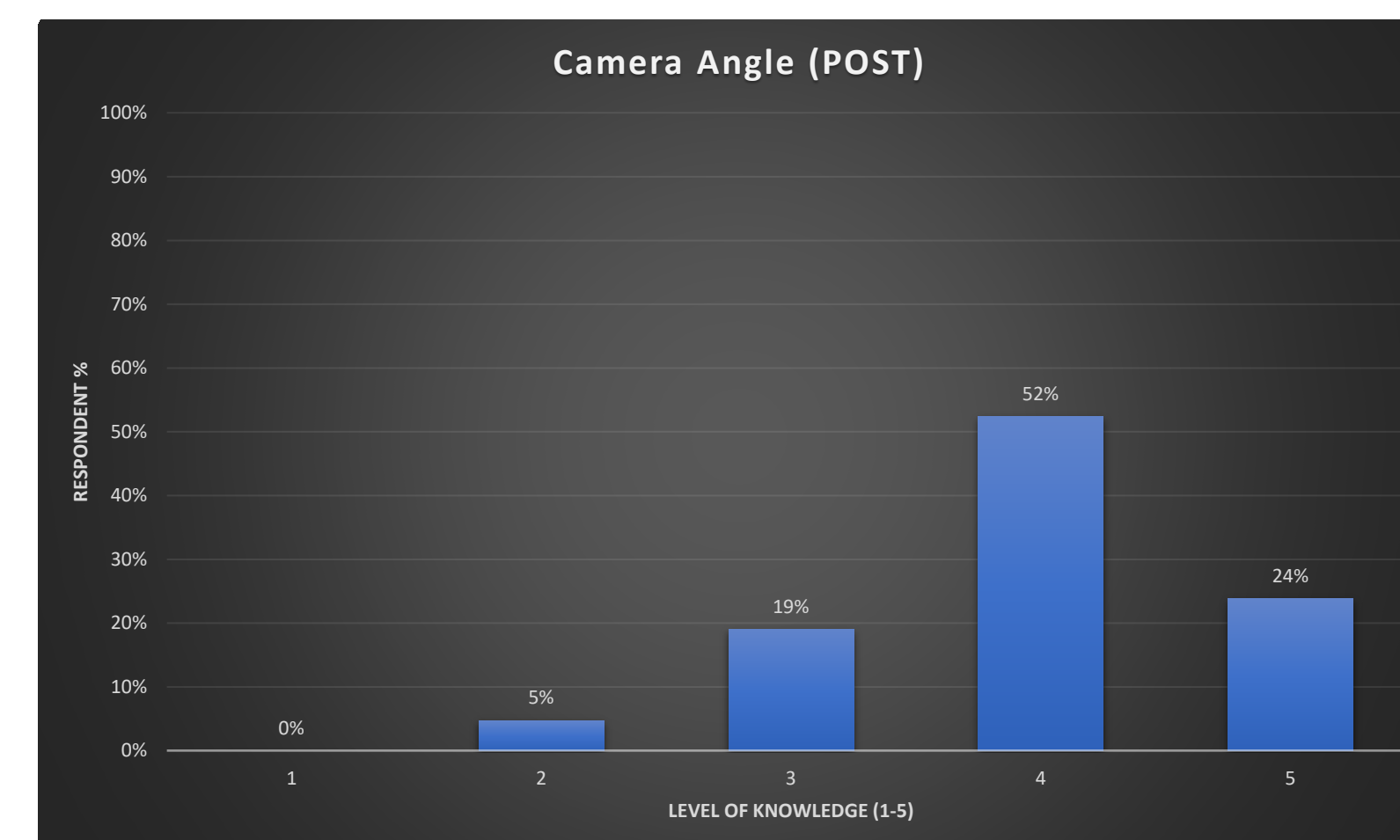


Table 3

Conclusion

Innovative trainings, such as the ones described herein, provide vital information related to food safety, audio/visual equipment, audience engagement, and appropriate resources for the successful demonstration of food preparation for audiences of all types. Across both food demonstration trainings, participants significantly improved their understanding of various virtual delivery components, including their overall understanding of how to conduct a successful, virtual food demonstration training. The ability of food demonstrations to be versatile, virtual, and evidence-based is a promising step for ensuring the safety of our food and the health of our citizens.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System