

# UNLOCK THE POWER OF PLANT-BASED DIETS: INTEGRATION INTO PUBLIC EDUCATION

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## OBJECTIVES

Maintaining health has numerous individual and social benefits. The importance of consuming vegetables and fruits is highlighted in nutritional recommendations, yet the recommended quantity of 5 servings on average is not reached by the European Union's countries. Our aim was to investigate Hungarian secondary school students' vegetable, fruit and meat consumption habits, their openness to meatless dietary trends, and how their parents' and family members' eating habits influence their own eating routines.

## METHODS

We carried out our research among 107 students. We conducted a 20-minute lecture presentation about the beneficial health effects of plant-based diets then we had a follow-up investigation to monitor the changes in the student's attitude to the presented knowledge. There were questions for which the participants were able to choose their answer from the given ones and 0-10 scales had been used too. Data analysis was performed using descriptive (absolute and relative prevalence) and mathematical (chi-square test, analysis of variance) statistical methods after testing for normality of the data at 95% probability ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## RESULTS

After the presentation, a significantly higher proportion of respondents considered the importance of a meat-free menu (after presentation =  $6.19 \pm 3.22$  points; before presentation =  $5.24 \pm 3.34$  points ( $p = 0.035$ )) (Figure 1.). Our presentation resulted that significantly more respondents would try the plant-based diets (meat-free: Before: 60% -Yes, 40% -No; After: 75,7% -Yes, 24,3% -No;  $p = 0.018$ ; plant-based food: Before: 45,8%- Yes, 54,2% - No, After: 68% - Yes, 32%- No;  $p = 0.002$ ) (Figure 2.). We observed that women are more willing to choose plant-based diets than men (61% of women and 24% of men would try;  $p < 0.001$ ) (Figure 3.).

## CONCLUSIONS

Our results showed that a 20-minute-long lecture on secondary school students would influence the participant's attitude toward a healthier dietary pattern. We concluded that educating students about plant-based diets should be part of the curriculum towards a healthier generation.

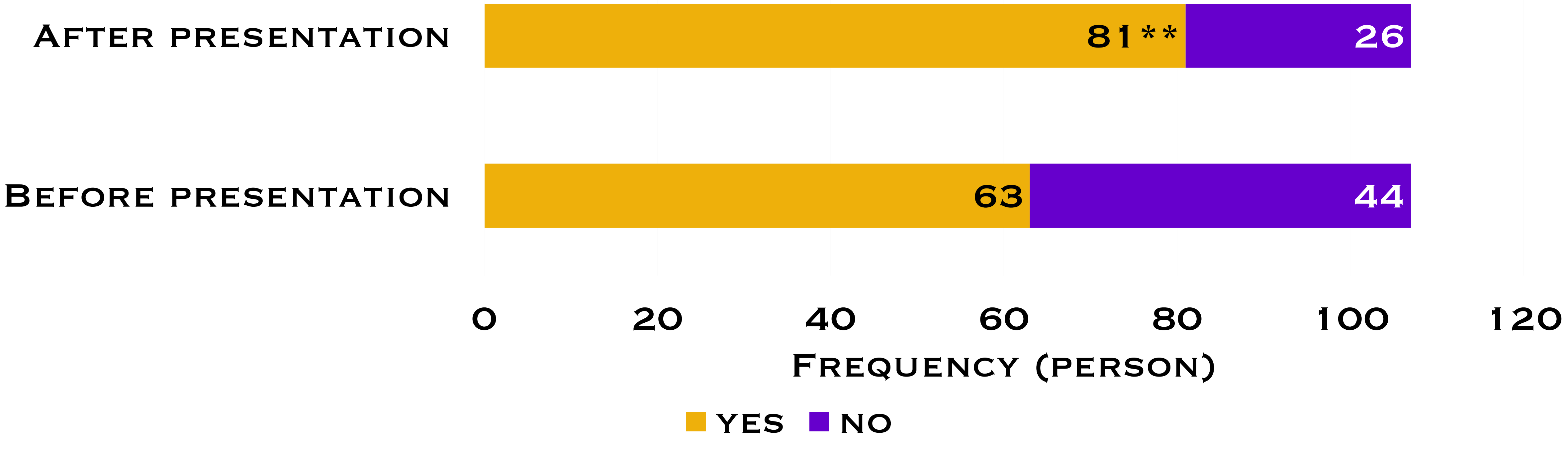


Figure 1.  
The change in openness toward plant-based diet as a result of the presentation (n=107) (2022) \*Significant at 0.05; \*\* Significant at 0.01; \*\*\* Significant at 0.001

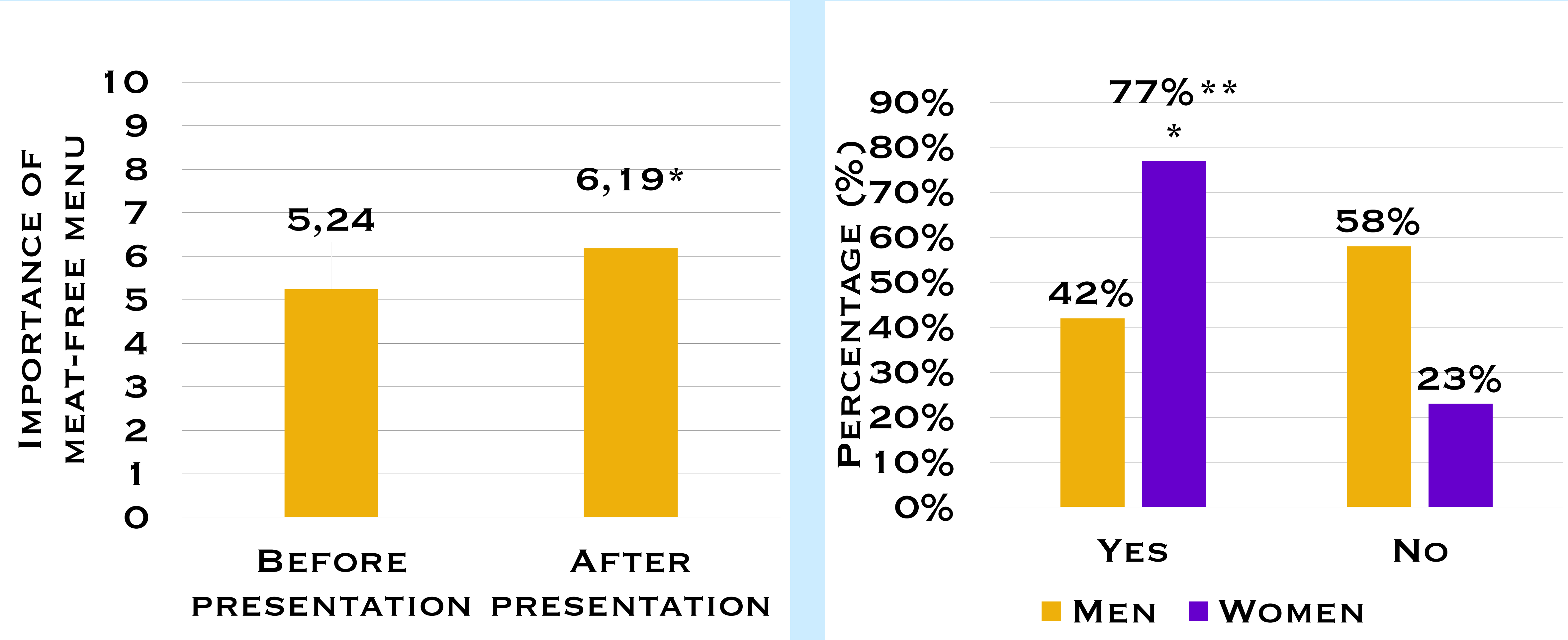


Figure 2.  
How the importance of meat-free menu changed due to the presentation (n=107) (2022)  
\*Significant at 0.05; \*\* Significant at 0.01; \*\*\* Significant at 0.001

Figure 3.  
The openness toward meat-free menu – gender differences (n=107) (2022)  
\*Significant at 0.05; \*\* Significant at 0.01; \*\*\* Significant at 0.001

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