

Assessing the HPV Knowledge and Awareness Gap between Male versus Female College Students

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Background

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most prevalent, but preventable STD worldwide, affecting about 79 million people in the US alone, with 14 million people infected annually (CDC, 2017).
- Former vaccination campaigns centered on cervical cancer has led to this pervasive misunderstanding that the vaccine is only for women, and that HPV is a “woman’s disease.”
- On average, it is estimated that 91.3% of men and 84.3% of women will contract HPV at some point in their lifetime (Chesson et al. 2014).

Objective

The goal of this study was to assess whether college females have higher levels of knowledge and awareness about HPV risks than males

Methodology

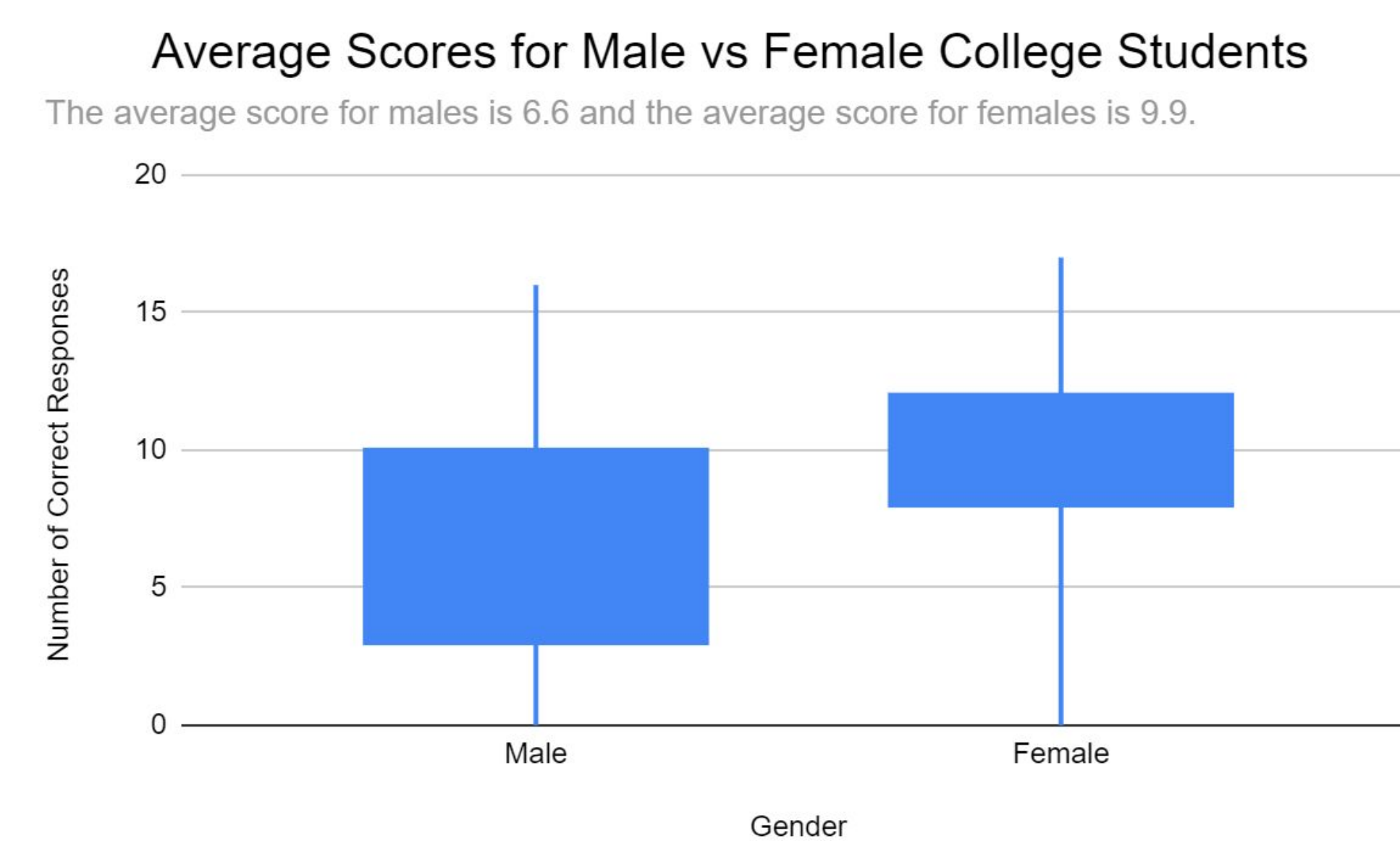
- We compiled questions from previous research studies into a 27-question anonymous survey in order to assess personal HPV knowledge, perceived risk/shame, and overall awareness.
 - We also asked about sources of knowledge of HPV (if it applies).
- We have 18-point True/False/IDK questions.
- For the participants who marked “IDK”, their answers were marked as an incorrect response, therefore receiving no points for that question.

Methodology (cont.)

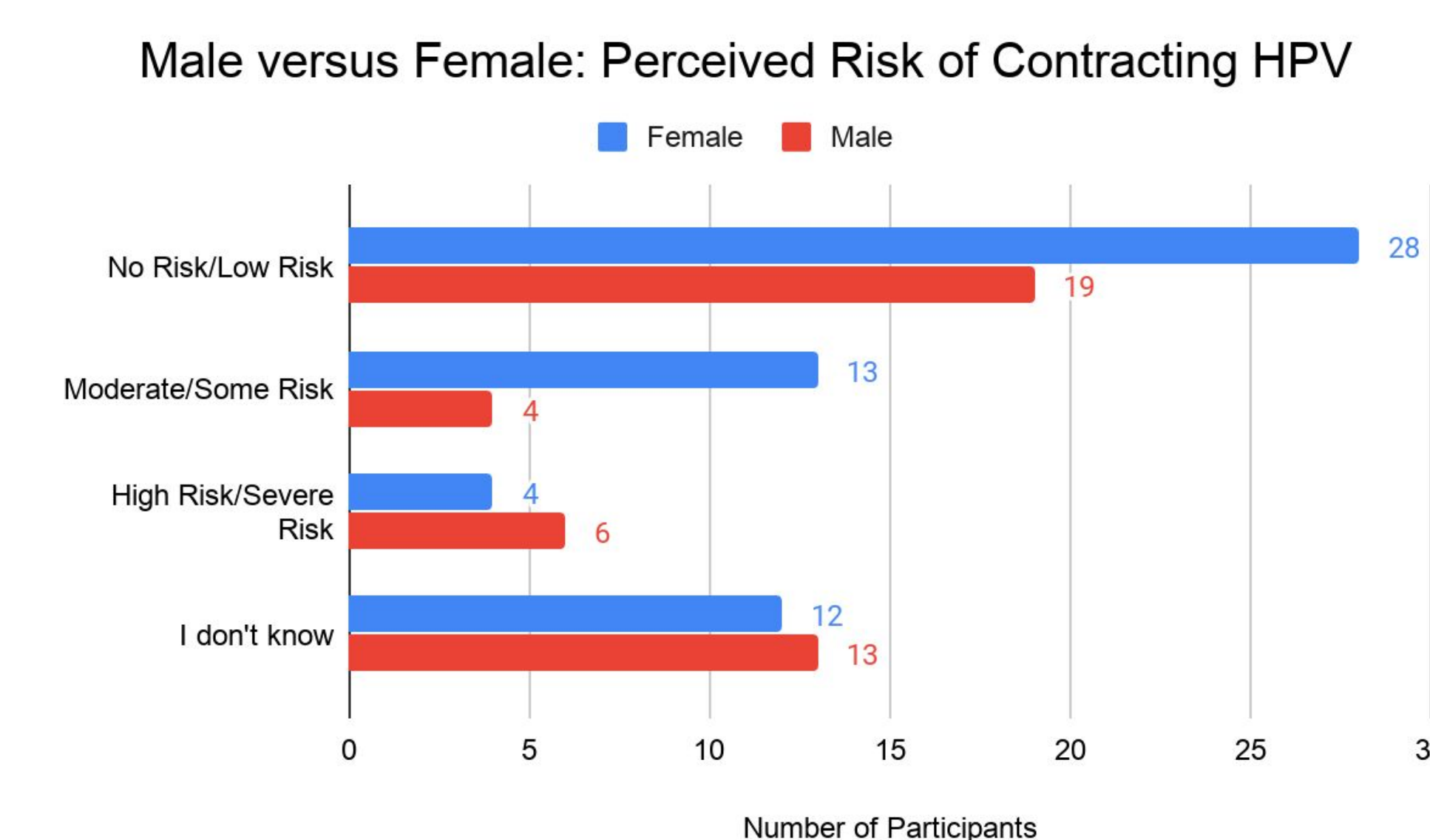
- Our survey respondents are current UCSD undergraduates between the ages of 18 to 26, and includes both males and females. Females will be used as a comparison group.
- Our 2020 cross-sectional analysis survey was sent out to UCSD students via department emails and facebook posts.

Results

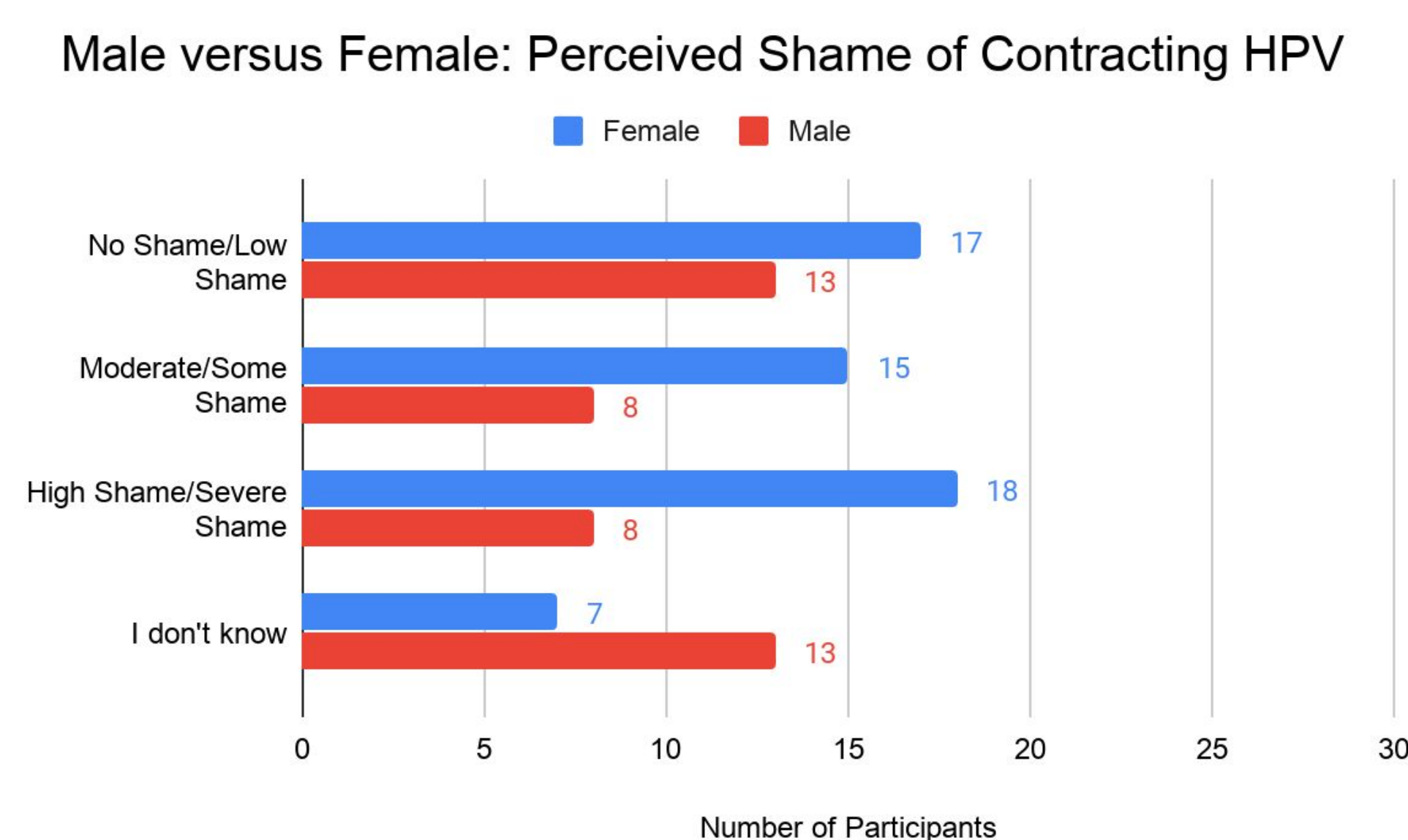
- Our survey was completed by 101 UCSD undergraduate students. Two participants were excluded due to not meeting criteria.



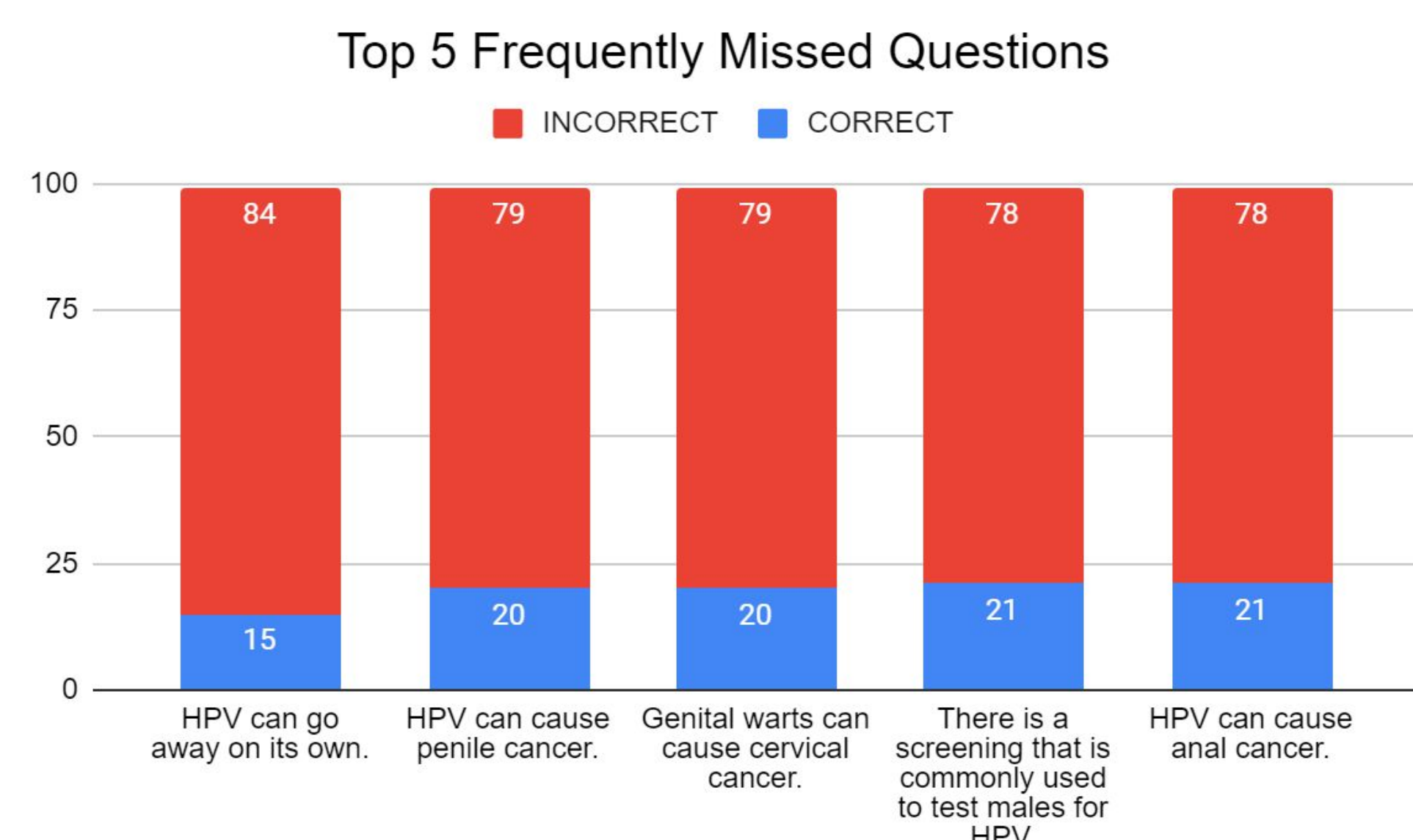
- On the 18-point awareness quiz, males had an average score of 6.6 and a standard deviation of 4.7. Females had an average score of 9.9 and a standard deviation of 3.5.



Results (cont.)



- For perceived shame, there was high amounts of shame, especially among females, but there was not high amounts of perceived risk. This is significant since both females and males are at risk.



- The number one most missed question was “HPV can go away on its own”. Only 15.2% of the participants answered correctly. The second most missed question was “HPV can cause penile cancer”. Only 20.2% of the participants answered correctly.
- One of the questions that was answered correctly, with 68% getting it correct was: Certain types of HPV can lead to cervical cancer in women.
 - This response rate can support the idea that most people associate HPV with cervical cancer and women, even if men can get HPV-related cancers, too.

Conclusion

- There is an existing, pervasive lack of knowledge and risk surrounding HPV among college students regardless of gender.
 - Many subjects marked the “I don’t know” response on the quiz and the perceived risk/shame questions showing that many college students still do not know about general HPV knowledge or their potential risks for HPV.
- From our study results, we conclude that being a male increases the likelihood that one possesses a lower understanding of HPV knowledge and risks.
 - More research needs to be conducted with a larger sample sizes, and in other universities to determine the other factors contributing to the gap.

Policy Implication

- Our findings suggest that it is imperative to launch an HPV knowledge campaign on college campuses, and test for its effectiveness.
- These campaigns should focus on unaware populations such as male college students to increase personal health knowledge and informed health decisions.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). Human Papillomavirus (HPV): HPV Fact Sheet. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>
- Chesson, H. W., Dunne, E. F., Hariri, S., & Markowitz, L. E. (2014). The estimated lifetime probability of acquiring human papillomavirus in the United States. Sexually transmitted diseases, 41 (11), 660–664. <https://doi.org/10.1097/OLQ.0000000000000193>