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The Value of Positive Feedback: an Underutilized Tool in Ophthalmology Resident Education

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Introduction

- There is limited research on the effectiveness of positive feedback as a teaching tool in ophthalmology postgraduate medical education settings.
- In this project, we explored the effects of a positive feedback exercise on resident professional identity formation, performance, and wellness through a pilot event within the ophthalmology residency program at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Methods

- 14 VCU ophthalmology residents were given a pre-wellness activity survey asking them to respond to 4 statements:
 - 1) I feel like I am doing a good job as a resident
 - 2) I feel confident at work
 - 3) I feel like my feedback at work is (positive or negative)
 - 4) I have imposter syndrome
- Positive feedback regarding all residents was then anonymously collected from faculty and staff and read aloud during an ophthalmology resident wellness day event.
- Residents completed a post-wellness activity survey responding to the same 4 prompts, as well as 2 additional statements:
 - 1) I feel like this exercise helped my self-esteem
 - 2) I found this exercise helpful
- Feedback regarding the utility of the exercise was also collected anonymously from residents.

Results

- 11 residents (78.6%) completed the pre-activity survey and 9 residents (64.3%) completed the post-activity survey. Responses to questions regarding self worth are below:

Figure 1. Resident responses to the statement: I feel like I am doing a good job as a resident

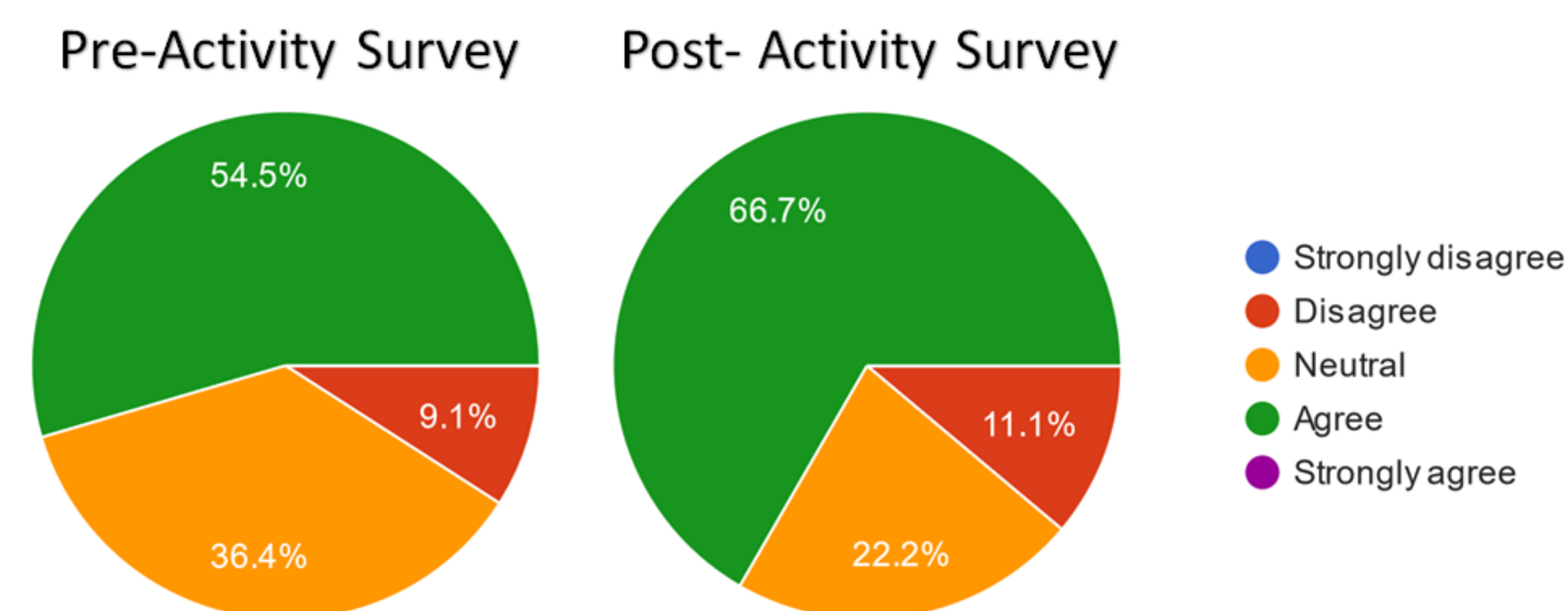


Figure 2. Resident responses to the statement: I feel confident at work

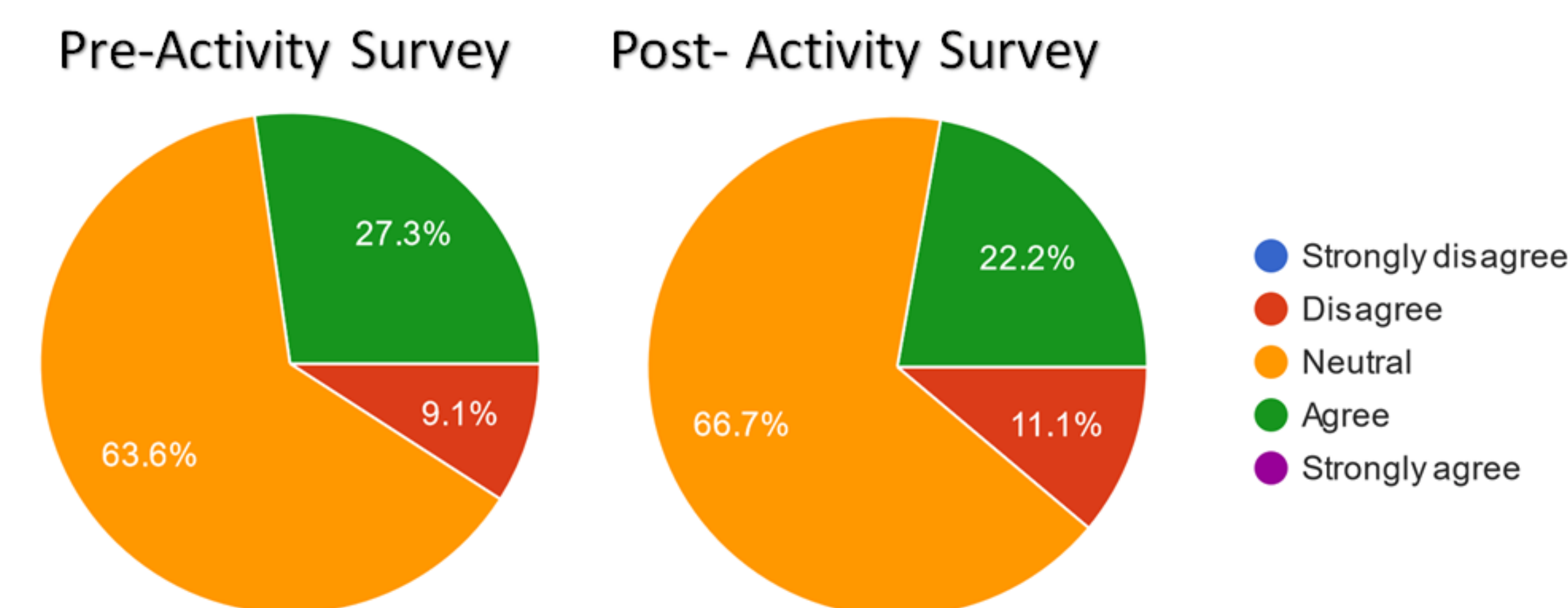


Figure 3. Resident responses to the statement: I feel like my feedback at work is...

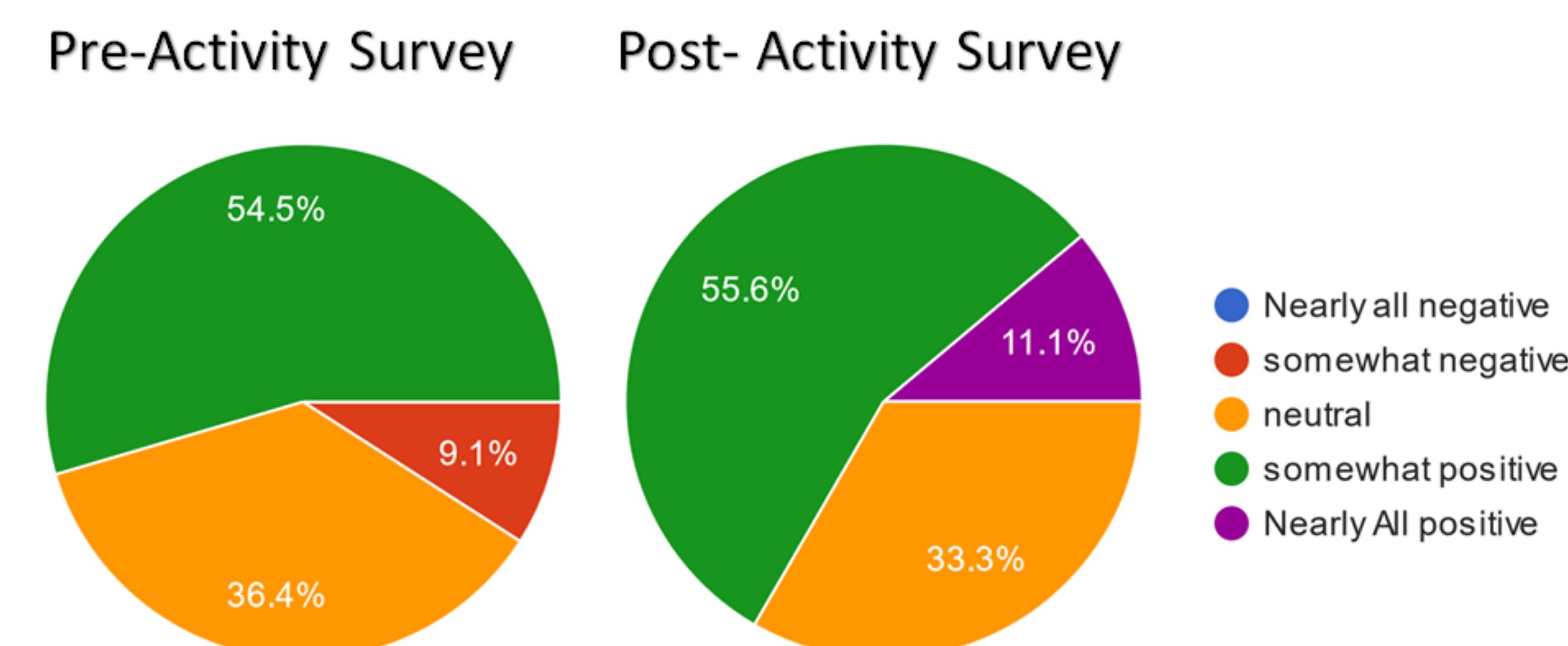


Figure 4. Resident responses to the statement: I have imposter syndrome

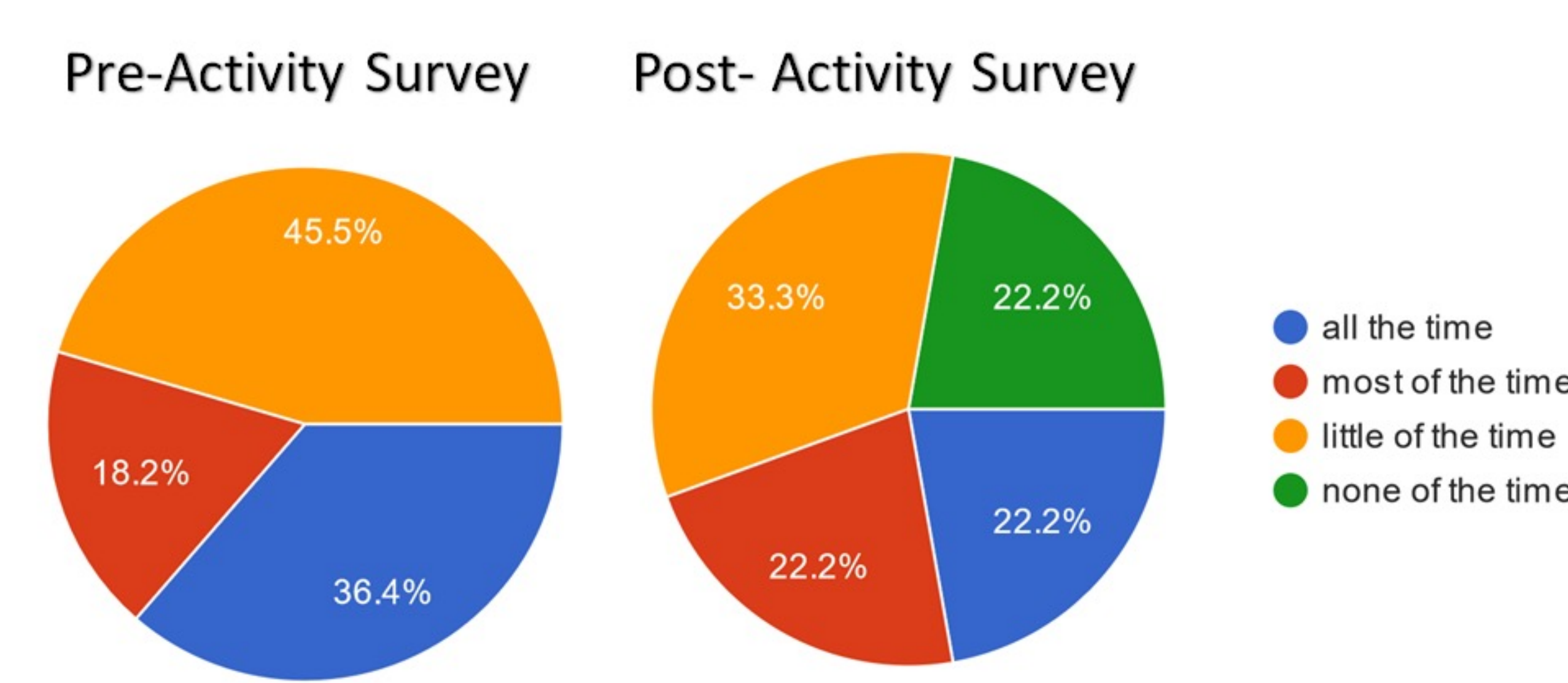
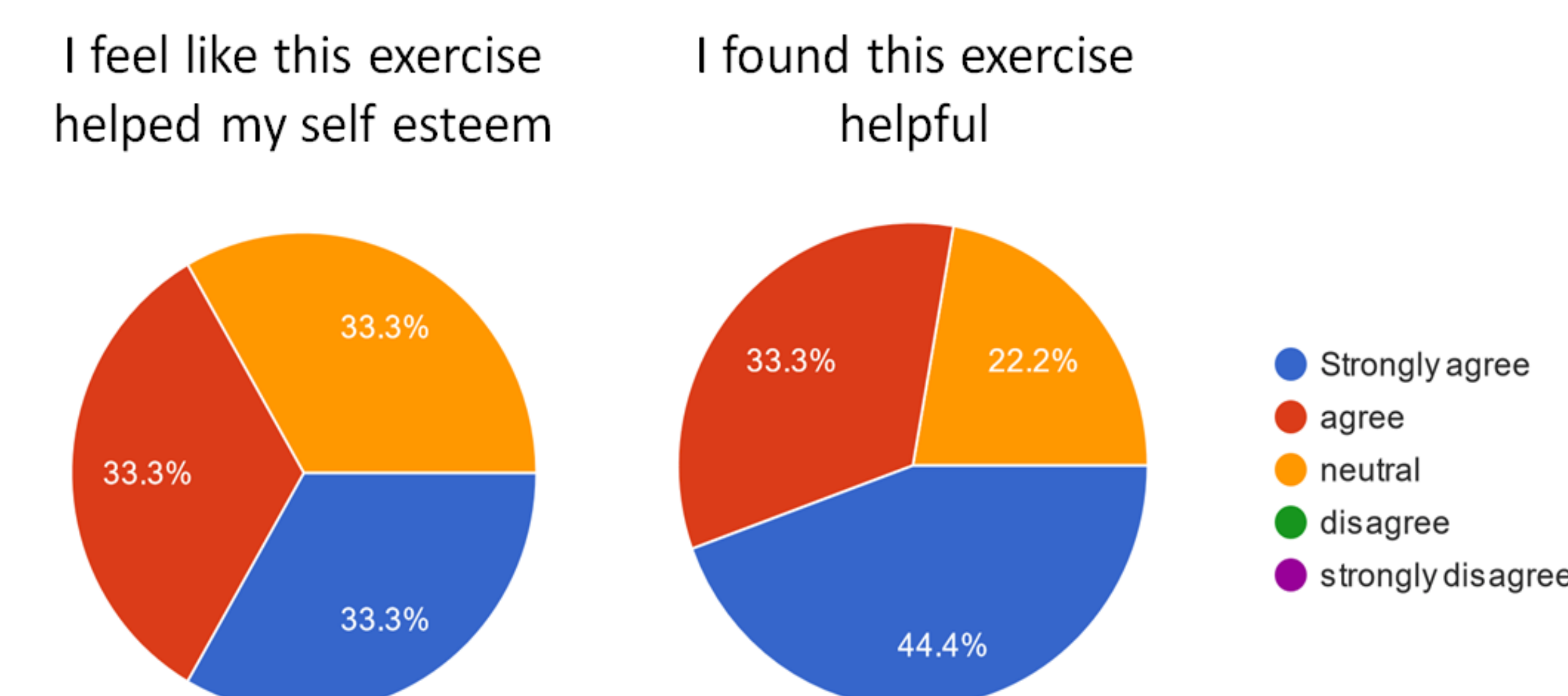


Figure 5. Resident responses to 2 additional statements in the post-activity survey



- There was notable improvement in the way that residents viewed themselves and the feedback they received after the wellness activity.
- 66.7% of participants reported improvements in their self-esteem following the positive feedback exercise, and 77.7% of residents reported that the exercise was helpful (Fig. 5).
- All additional comments collected expressed approval of the exercise and a desire to permanently incorporate it into the wellness curriculum.

Conclusions

- Modifiable barriers to resident wellness include unfriendly work environments and lack of wellness initiatives.
- Thoughtful implementation of positive feedback offers an avenue for residency programs to create a nurturing environment that promotes wellness.
- The main limitation of this study was the small sample size, but as this is a pilot program there are opportunities for growth and expansion.
- Our results support that proper use of positive feedback can significantly improve trainees' professional identity, confidence, and enthusiasm for their profession.

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