



**CADER**

**Center for Aging & Disability  
Education & Research**

# **Vermont Learning Enhancement in Aging Program (LEAP) *Evaluation Report***



School of Social Work:  
Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research

# Introduction

The **Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER)** at the Boston University School of Social Work is dedicated to bringing evidence-based research into practice through workforce innovation in the aging and disability fields. CADER programs and courses apply a competency-focused approach to comprehensive training, committed to enhancing the skills of practitioners in the field at all levels of experience.



The **Center on Aging at the University of Vermont (UVM)**, the **UVM Department of Social Work**, and the **Dementia Family Caregiver Center (DFCC) at the University of Vermont Medical Center** partnered with CADER to pilot a curriculum that prepares health and social service professionals to support the growing needs of Vermont's aging population.





Through their partnership, UVM and CADER developed the **Vermont Learning Enhancement in Aging Program (LEAP)**, with the goal of increasing the age-friendly workforce of health and social service professionals that serve older adults in the rural communities of Vermont.

# Vermont LEAP Overview

The VT LEAP Certificate is a self-paced, online, five-course certificate program.

Between January 6, 2025 and June 20, 2025, **15** learners completed the VT LEAP Certificate. One learner completed courses 1-4.

After completing each course, learners participated in a 75-minute virtual facilitated group session led by trained facilitators.





# Certificate Program Courses

The Vermont Learning Enhancement in Aging Program consists of 5 courses:

- 1 Core Issues in Aging and Disability
- 2 Assessment with Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities
- 3 Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias
- 4 Mental Health and Aging Issues
- 5 Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults



# What do you expect to gain from your participation in this training program?

**"To learn more on how to help my elderly tenants that have disabilities or early stages of dementia."**

**"Expertise in supporting the most vulnerable adults."**

**"Greater ability to support older Vermonters to access resources they need to age well, better ability to support staff in this work."**

**"A better understanding of aging and a new skillset to work with the population I currently work with."**

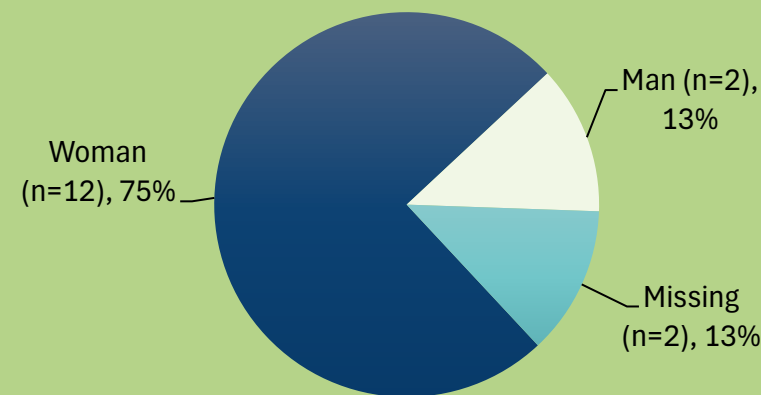
**"To develop knowledge and skills to help older adults effectively navigate the conditions and challenges they are facing, and ultimately gain increased confidence in my day-to-day work."**

**"I hope to gain more resources that I can bring to our staff and the public."**

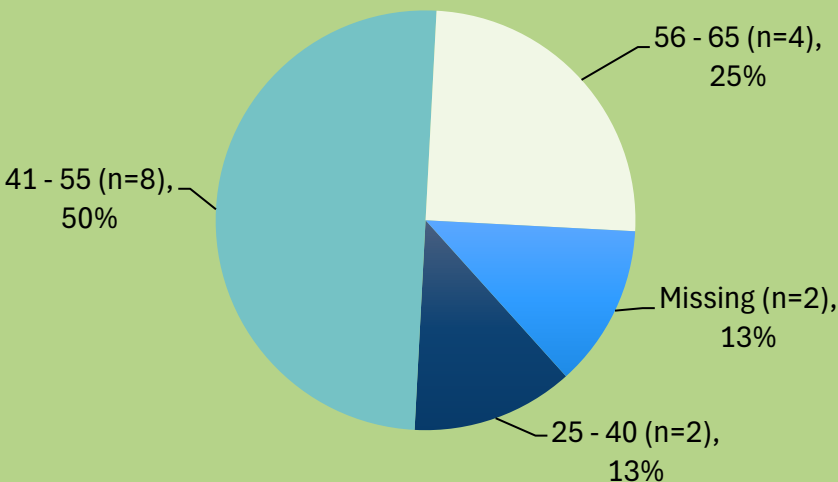


# Learner Demographics

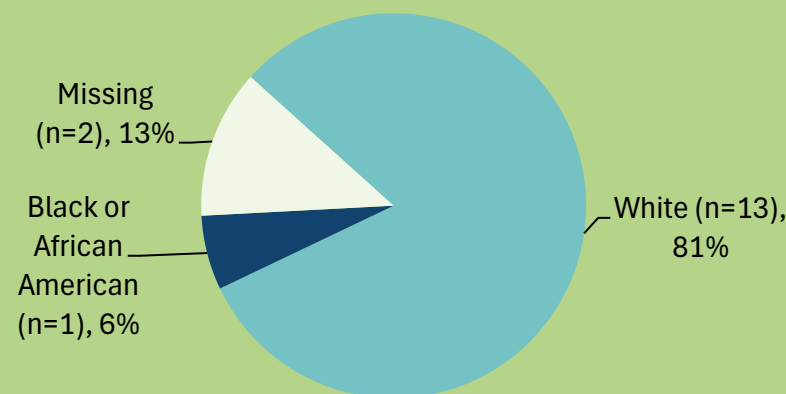
Learners by Gender



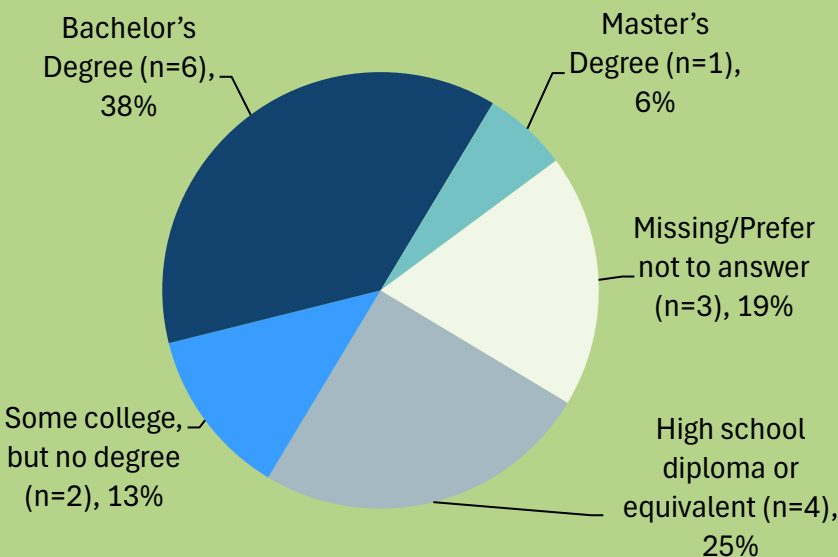
Learners by Age



Learners by Race

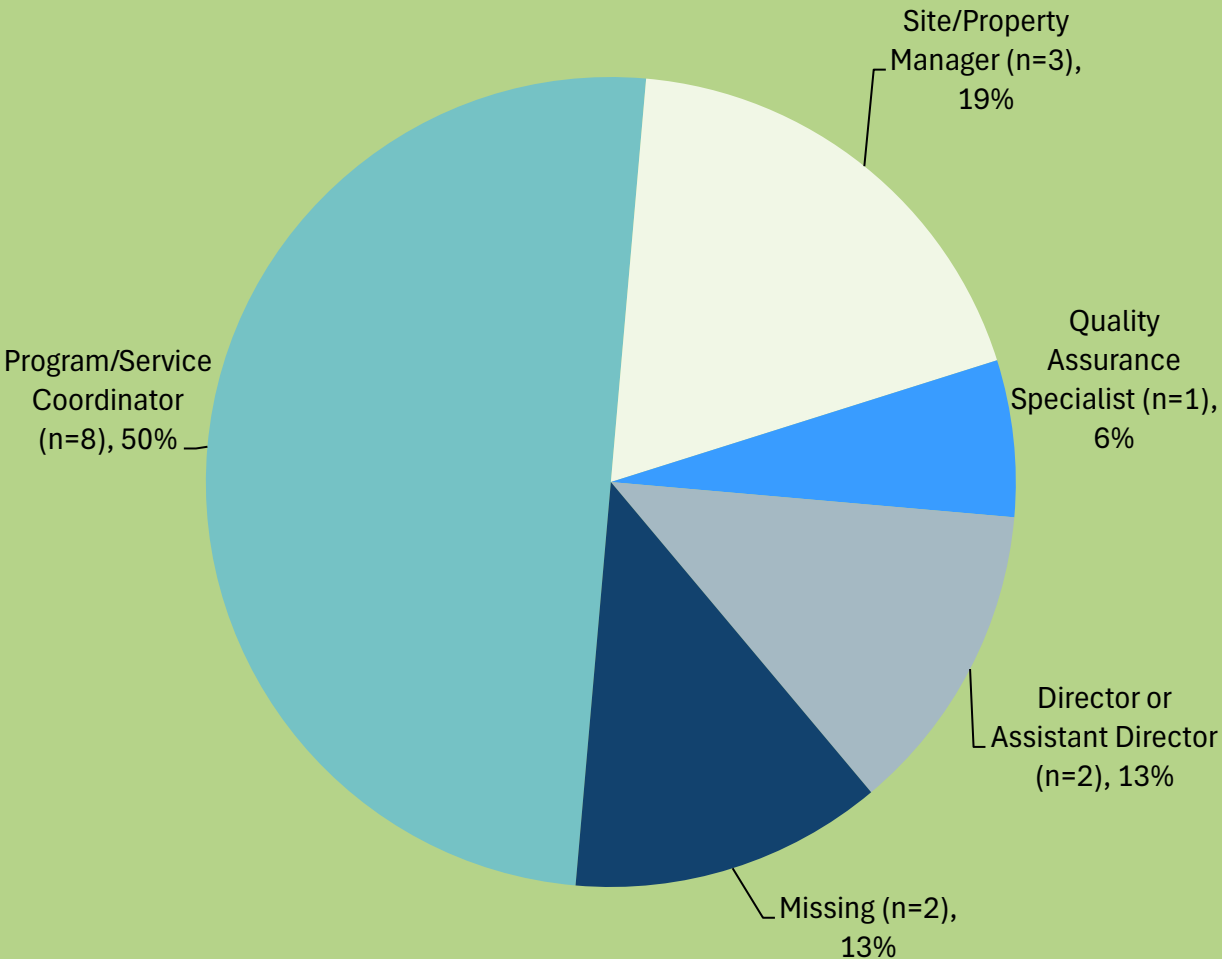


Learners by Education

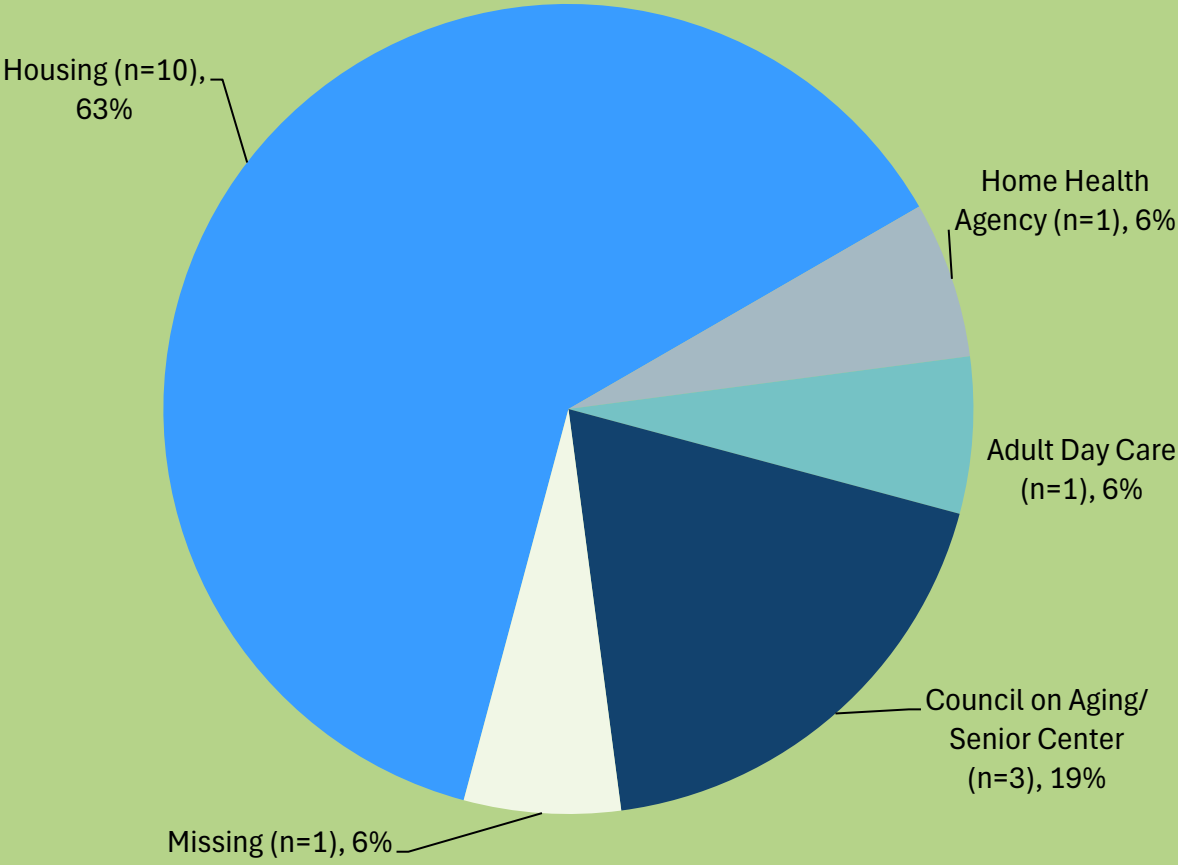


# Learner Work Experience

Learners by Occupational Role



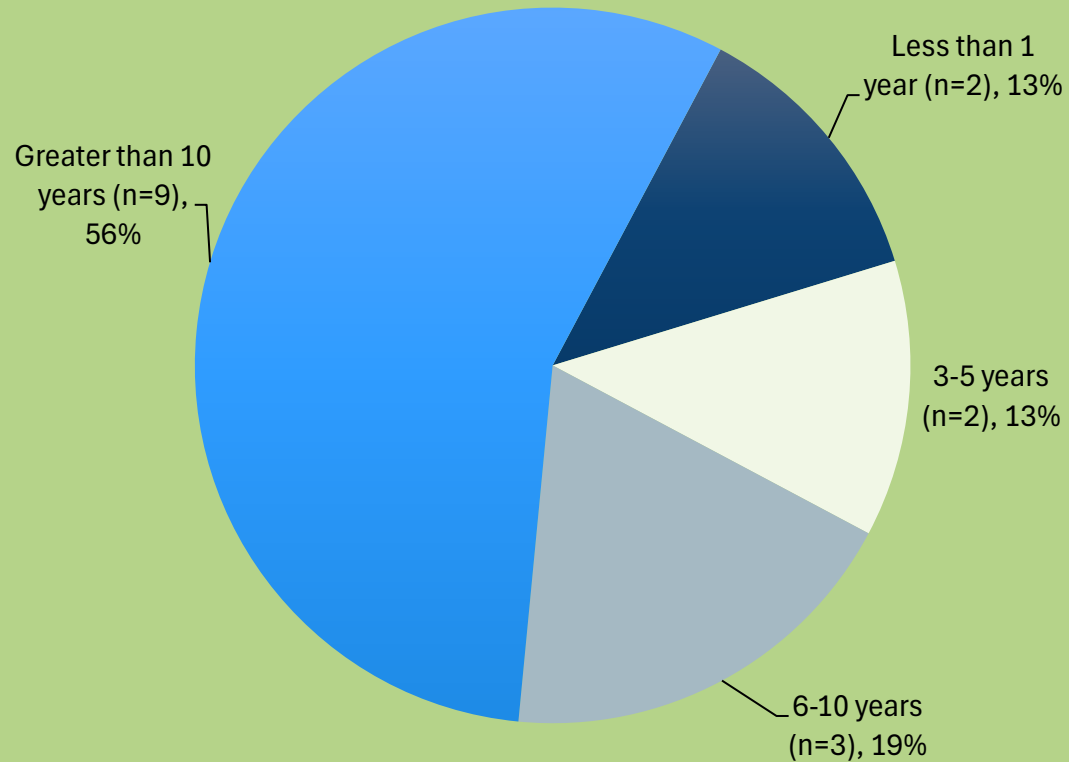
Learners by Work Setting



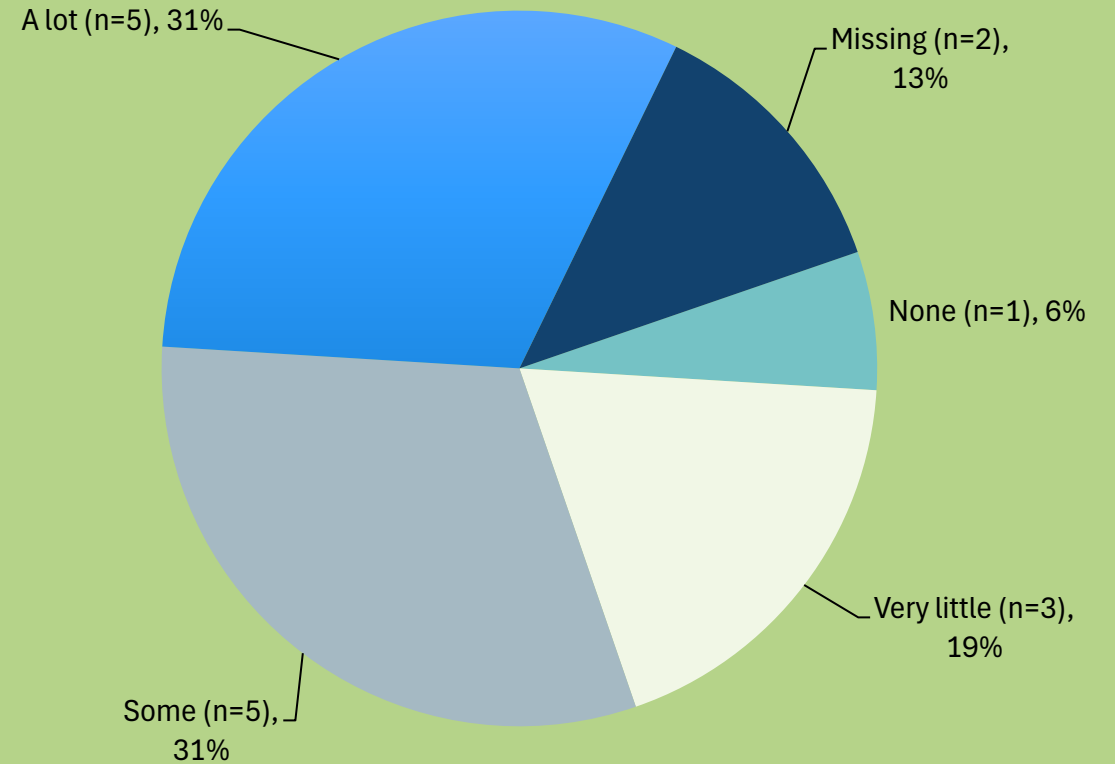


# Learner Work Experience

**How many years of experience do you have in providing care to others?**



**Have you received any prior training or education in providing care to others?**





# Course Evaluation Results

The following slides present the course evaluation results, including:

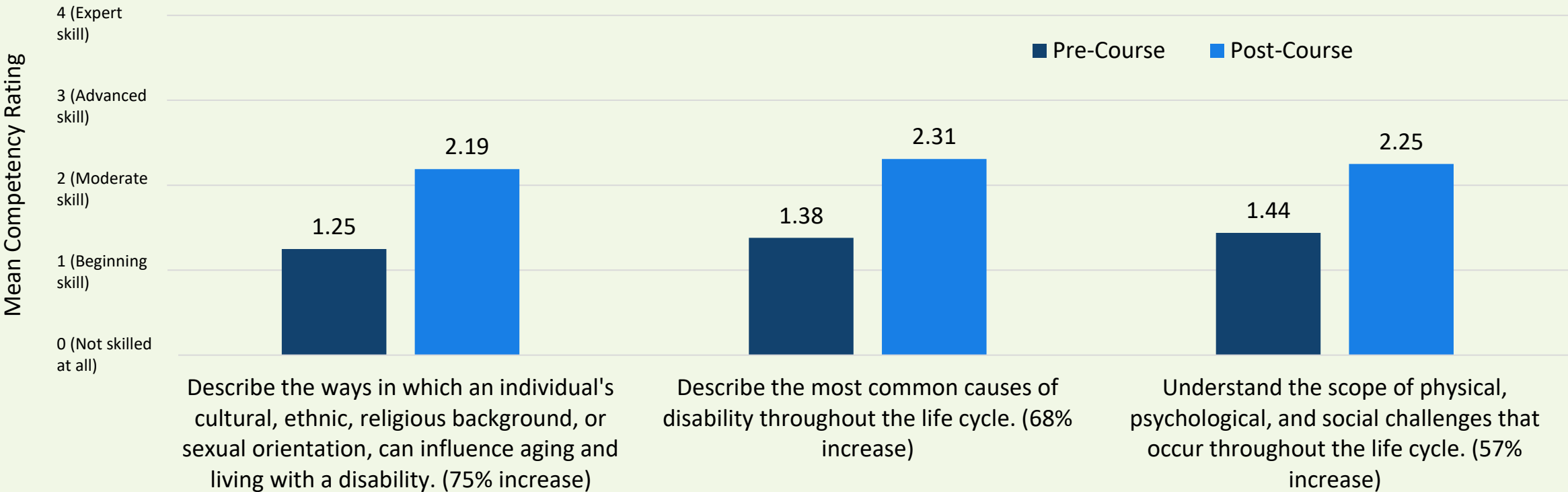
- **Competencies:** At the beginning and end of each course, learners were asked to rate their skill level in various competencies using the following scale: 0 - Not skilled at all; 1 - Beginning skill; 2 - Moderate skill; 3 - Advanced skill; 4 - Expert skill.
- **Course Feedback:** At the end of each course, learners shared their feedback about the course, including what they found helpful and how they intend to apply what they learned.

# Results: Competencies

## Course 1: Core Issues in Aging and Disability

The following graph shows statistically significant increases in mean competency ratings for three course competencies.

**Core Issues in Aging and Disability:**  
Mean Competency Ratings



# Results: Course Feedback

## Course 1: Core Issues in Aging and Disability

### What they learned

“Historical context related to aging and disability, conditions facing people who are aging and who have disabilities, legal issues and consumer choice.”

“Understanding the laws and when and how they came into be.”

### What they liked

“This is a great course. I liked that it was challenging and comprehensive. I liked the written materials as well as our zoom meeting to reflect.”

“Even though I've been working with older adults for more than 10 years, I've never had this information laid out for me to learn and study.”

### How they will apply it

“I'll be more knowledgeable about what older adults and older adults with disabilities are emotionally and physically having to deal with every day, which will mean I will better know what questions to ask them so that I can better assist them.”

“To be more mindful of people and their needs.”

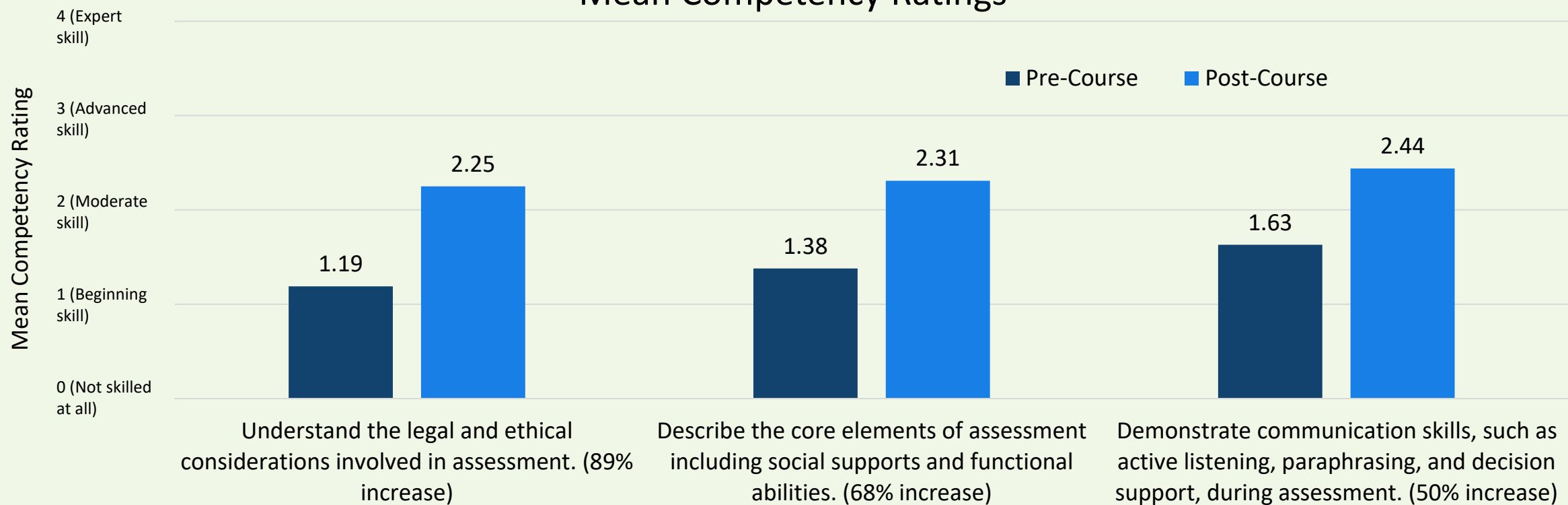


# Results: Competencies

## Course 2: Assessment of Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

The following graph shows statistically significant increases in mean competency ratings for three course competencies.

**Assessment of Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities:**  
Mean Competency Ratings





# Results: Course Feedback

## Course 2: Assessment of Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

### What they learned

“A better understanding of how assessment developed and the ethical principles behind assessment.”

“Understanding the assessment process and how soft skills are very important within.”

“Ethics and the Law in Assessment.”

### What they liked

“Course is right on, the structure of studying is organized very well for a smooth learning.”

“The discussions and being able to go back to text.”

“The content is structured to propel one to learn and continue learning.”

### How they will apply it

“I will approach assessments with more perspective on ‘partnering’ with participants and also view ethical considerations with a different eye.”

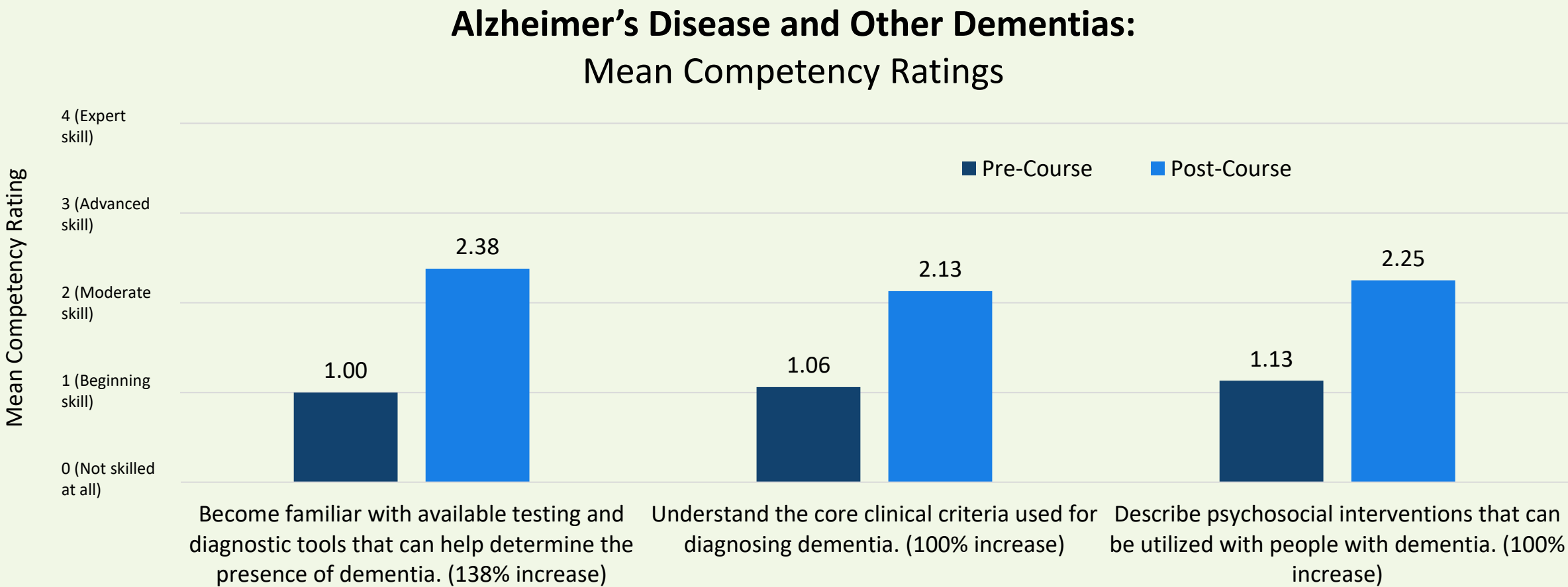
“Being more mindful of cultural differences.”



# Results: Competencies

## Course 3: Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias

The following graph shows statistically significant increases in mean competency ratings for three course competencies.



# Results: Course Feedback

## Course 3: Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias

### What they learned

“Strategies for communicating with those who have dementia.”

“Clearly explaining and showing examples of the stages of Alzheimer's.”

### What they liked

“This course was well-structured, guiding participants step-by-step to understand the concepts. It effectively explained Alzheimer's disease and various types of dementia in an accessible manner.”

“Seeing real life examples of individuals and their families; also the simulation that showed what it was like to have dementia.”

### How they will apply it

“Having more awareness of early stages of dementia.”

“Tailor my approach to folks I interact with that have a dementia diagnosis.”

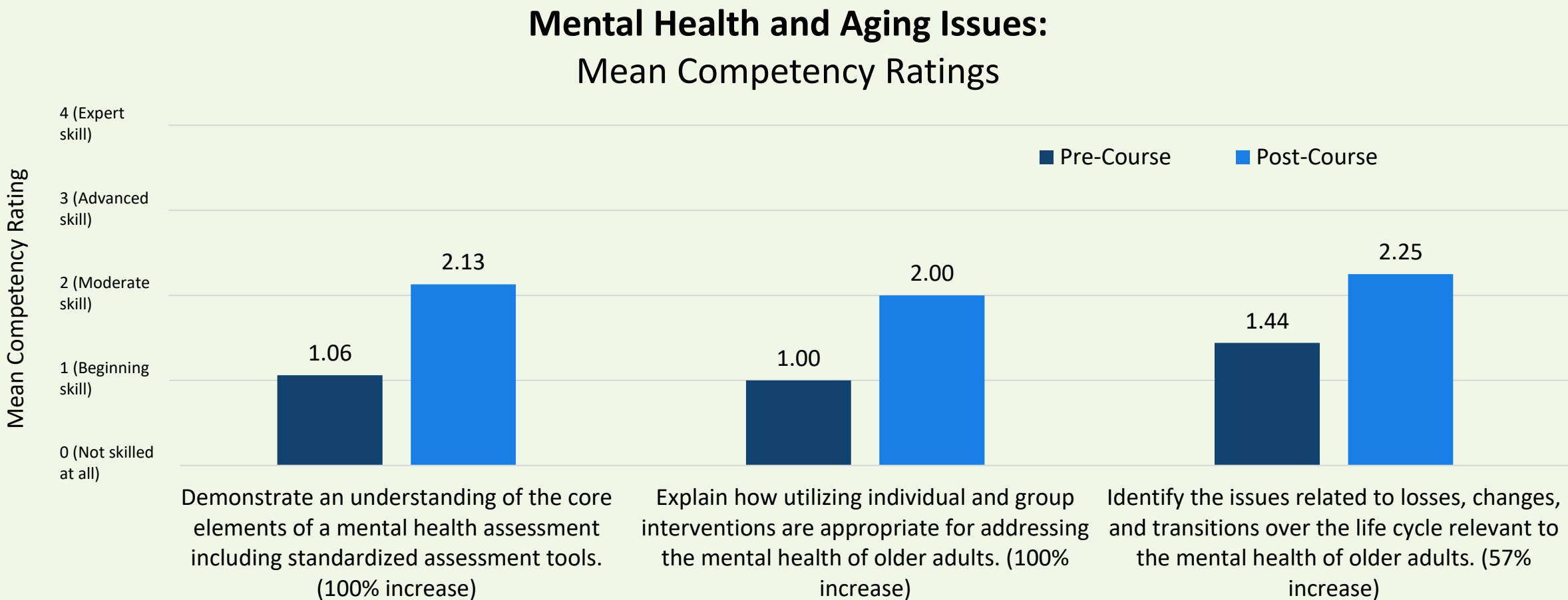
“This course has changed my understanding of how dementia works. I will be more equipped to handle situations that come up in my work with people with dementia.”



# Results: Competencies

## Course 4: Mental Health and Aging Issues

The following graph shows statistically significant increases in mean competency ratings for three course competencies.



# Results: Course Feedback

## Course 4: Mental Health and Aging Issues

### What they learned

“I have a much better understanding of risk factors for older adults.”

“Mental health disorders, treatments, and assessments, along with ethical principles and considerations in healthcare.”

### What they liked

“I like the case studies and real-life examples.”

“All of the sample assessments.”

“LOVED the pages of resources and links!”

“Clarified the different mental health challenges older adults face, and the ways to address them.”

### How they will apply it

“To be able to better identify mental health concerns and offer resources.”

“Being more aware of others’ mental health.”

“Better referrals based on better understanding of range of mental health challenges.”

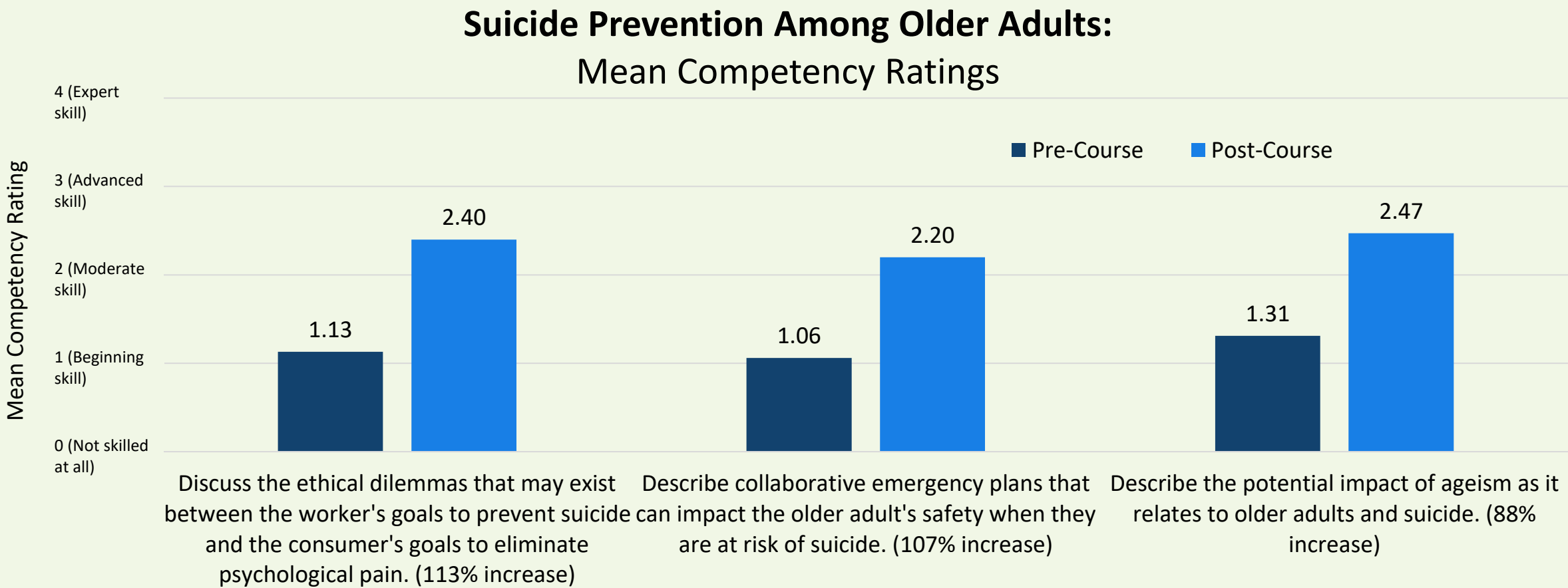




# Results: Competencies

## Course 5: Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults

The following graph shows statistically significant increases in mean competency ratings for three course competencies.



# Results: Course Feedback

## Course 5: Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults

### What they learned

“Background information.”

“Strengthening my own understanding of ethical dilemmas.”

“The fact suicide varied significantly across different cultures and religions.”

### What they liked

“Excellent readings and resources, enjoyed group discussions.”

“The stories.”

“The assessment tools.”

“My knowledge of helping our older adults and those with mental illness has increased drastically. I feel more able to help those needing help.”

### How they will apply it

“More screening.”

“To look more carefully at risk factors.”

“I will monitor the mental health of my participants more closely now.”





# Certificate Evaluation Results

The following slides present the certificate evaluation results, including:

- **Workforce Readiness:** Prior to and after completing the certificate, learners were asked about their preparedness, comfort, and confidence.
- **Training Impact:** After completing the certificate, learners were asked about the extent to which the training will impact their work.
- **Certificate Feedback:** Learners were asked a series of open-ended questions about their participation in the certificate program.



# Results: Workforce Readiness

## Pre-Certificate

## Post-Certificate

How prepared do you feel to work with older adults and their families?

**56%**

of learners felt extremely or very prepared



**85%**

of learners felt extremely or very prepared

How comfortable do you feel working with older adults?

**94%**

of learners felt extremely or very comfortable



**100%**

of learners felt extremely or very comfortable

How confident do you feel working with older adults?

**62%**

of learners felt extremely or very confident



**93%**

of learners felt extremely or very confident

How confident do you feel working with people who have behavioral health concerns or dementia?

**25%**

of learners felt extremely or very confident



**57%**

of learners felt extremely or very confident

# Results: Training Impact

After completing the certificate program, learners were asked “To what extent did the LEAP training...”

Improve your work with older adults?

100%

responded somewhat, a lot, or to a great extent

Improve your work with people who have behavioral health concerns/dementia?

100%

responded somewhat, a lot, or to a great extent

Teach you valuable new skills?

100%

responded somewhat, a lot, or to a great extent

Teach you what to do differently when caring for older Vermonters?

93%

responded somewhat, a lot, or to a great extent





# Results: Certificate Feedback

After completing the certificate program, learners were asked what they gained from the program and how the program will impact their career.

**"As I am new to the community health worker role, I feel this program has given me a solid foundation to continue building upon as I move forward in this unique and rewarding career."**

**"I have more confidence in my ability to handle common issues and dilemmas in my work."**

**"More hands-on tools to address issues that may arise, especially around dementia/Alzheimer's disease, suicide."**

**"It has expanded my sense of what my role needs to consider, tools I can use, issues to be concerned about."**

**"A deeper understanding of individual needs and feelings when working with older adults."**

**"More comprehensive understanding of foundational issues which affect older adults."**



# Results: Certificate Feedback

After completing the certificate program, learners were asked how participation in the group sessions impacted their understanding and application of the course material.

**“It really just fleshed out my understanding and allowed me to have conversations that expanded upon what I learned in the reading.”**

**“Hearing ideas from others and what others do in different situations.”**

**“A great deal. Talking with others to understand more clearly the course material was very helpful.”**

**“The group sessions definitely enhanced my understanding/application of course material by hearing others expand on the material and being prompted to articulate my own connections and reflections.”**



# Conclusion

- 15 learners completed the Vermont Learning Enhancement in Aging Program (LEAP).
- Upon completion of each course, learners gained skills in key competency areas relevant to their practice with older adults.
- Learners gained confidence in working with older adults, including confidence in working with older adults who have behavioral health concerns or dementia.
- Learners intend to be more mindful of mental health and suicide risk, attentive to cultural differences, and better communicators.
- CADER hopes to continue our partnership with the Center on Aging at the University of Vermont to train additional health and social service professionals who serve older Vermonters.





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