

Share, Don't Scare!

Teaching online safety



Dr. Nora Rifon



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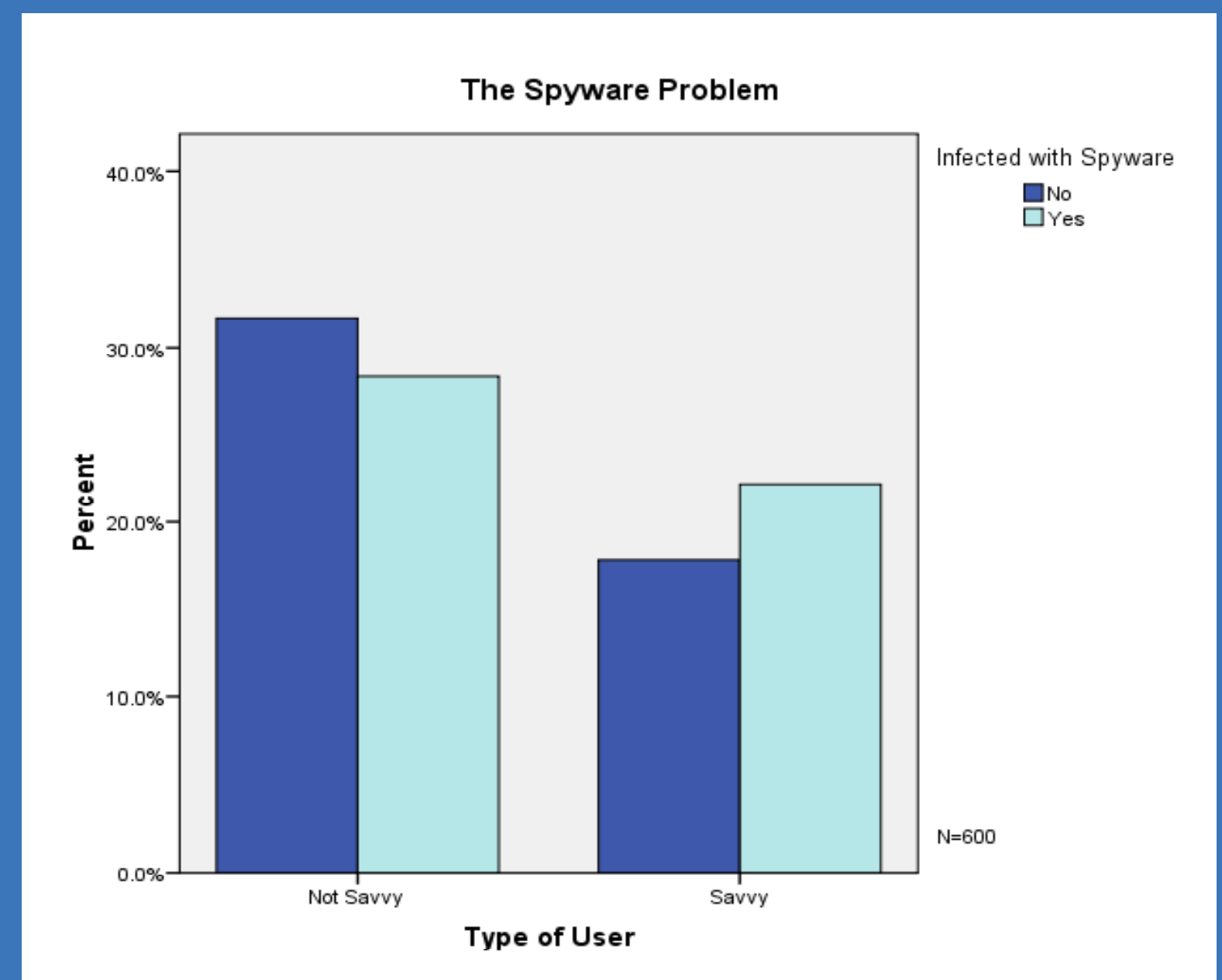
Dr. Richard Enbody

One of the popular methods to induce people to be safe online is to offer statistics and information meant to scare them into taking appropriate safety measures. However, the fear approach often backfires and leads to avoidance or maladaptive behaviors rather than appropriate responses (Witte & Allen, 2000). Instead, we need to *share* information with users to teach them *how* to use the technical protections rather than *scare* them.

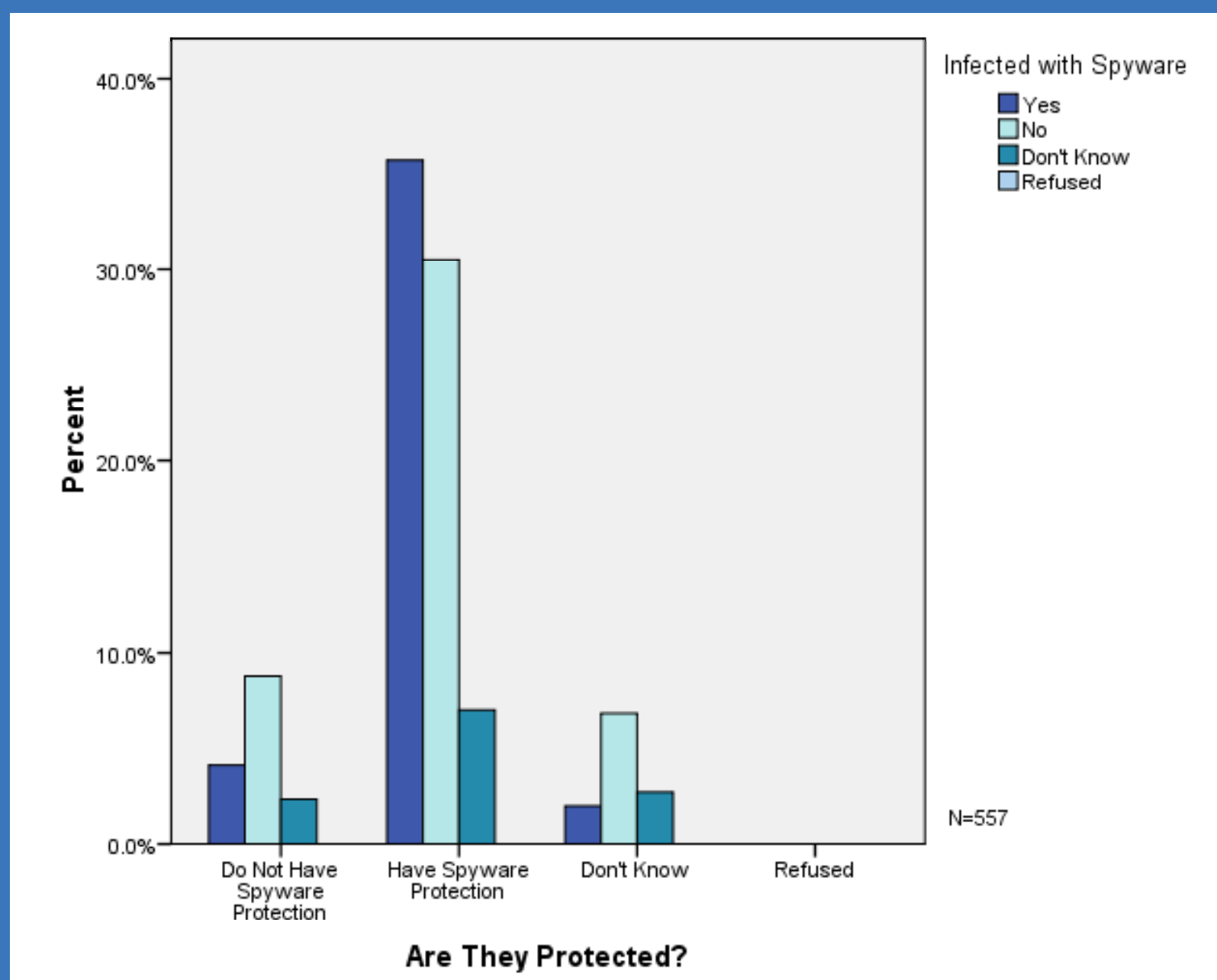
An educated public is a safer public.

The Good News: Our research indicates that Internet users who are savvy about spyware (those who know what it is and how to get rid of it) experience fewer problems with it (LaRose, Rifon, & Enbody, 2007).

The Bad News: Unfortunately, of those who *are* savvy about spyware, *more* people experienced a spyware infestation than didn't, perhaps learning about spyware the hard way: firsthand experience.



But technical solutions alone aren't enough.



Further research showed that of those who had spyware protection, *more* of them had been hit with spyware than hadn't, (LaRose, Rifon, & Enbody, 2007). Just providing the technology doesn't fix the problem—even people with spyware protection *still had spyware problems*, indicating a lack of user knowledge about *how* to use these protections. If we don't teach people how to protect themselves, we run the risk of an ignorant online population, continually infecting themselves and others. *Simply providing technical solutions isn't ensuring safety.*

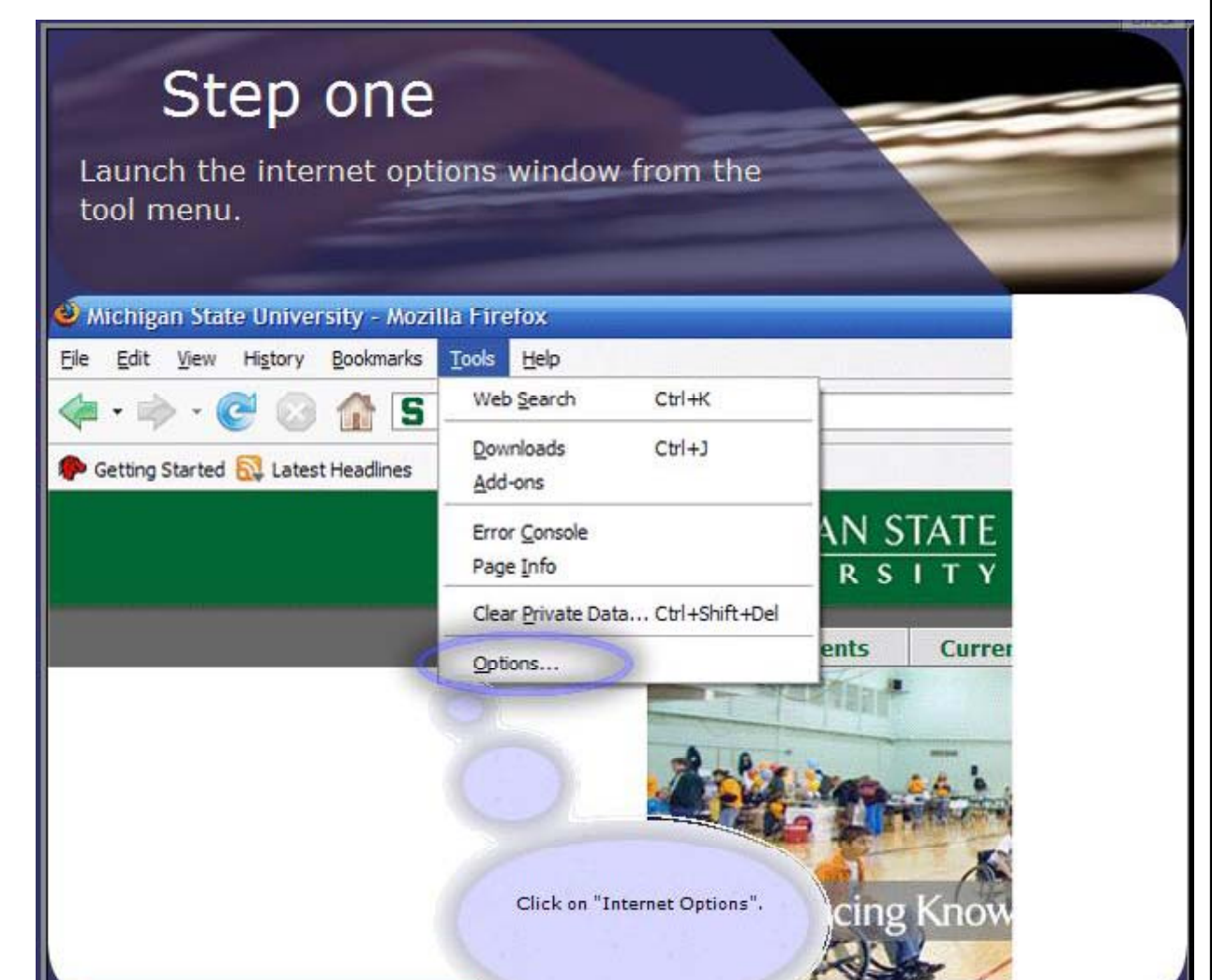
Education Best Practices

Interventions for Young Users

Learning through doing something oneself (mastering a skill) is the best method of gathering self-efficacy--the feeling that "I can do this!"--as well as the strongest predictor of intention to engage in protective behavior (LaRose, Rifon, & Wirth, 2007). The i-Safety website was designed to educate young people on the potential dangers of unsafe behavior, as well as teach them how to avoid these dangers through a combination of **vicarious learning** (watching) and **mastery** (doing) regarding the various **technical solutions** available that will increase their self-efficacy and, ultimately, their safe behavior.

The i-Safety intervention consists of information about four common types of online interactions:

- Email
- Surfing
- Social Networking
- Financial Transactions



"Show Me How" buttons open up step-by-step tutorials with screenshots, instructions, and pop-up bubbles that show just how to complete the recommended safe behavior.