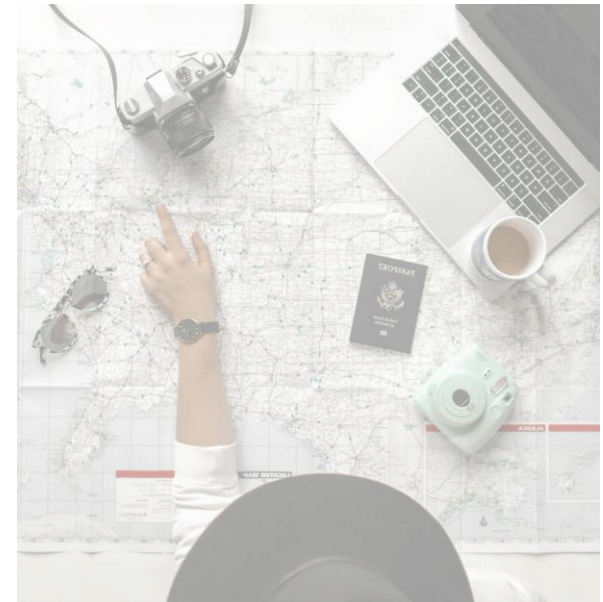


# Survey of Horse Rescue Volunteers

## Summary of Findings

1.19.2024



# Methodology



A survey was conducted by Cairn Consulting Group, an independent market research firm, in December 2023.

The sampling methodology targeted those who are currently volunteering or considering volunteering at a horse rescue.

Sampling was designed to obtain n=502 completed surveys across East (13%), South (29%), West (22%), and Midwest (35%) regions of the United States.

All surveys were completed online via an outbound solicitation.

The majority of survey respondents (90%) identify as female.



# Key Findings



## Key Talking Points



1. Respondents initially volunteered at a rescue because they enjoy working with horses, they are looking to work with directly hoses as part of their volunteer duties, and wish to advance their horse handling and husbandry skills. Indeed, after volunteering, respondents report being more comfortable with horses.
2. Volunteers have little expectations for their orientation training, however, they highly value direct access to a volunteer manager both while on-site and in the context of their daily duty assignments.
3. Volunteers can commit 3-5 hours per week, with the primary constraint on their ability to volunteer more frequently being their work schedules.
4. Respondents desire the ability to bring their friends and family and have access to basic amenities while volunteering, but report facing very few challenges.
5. When not at the rescue, volunteers like to stay informed about intakes/adoptions and upcoming events. The majority of volunteers are currently communicating, and prefer to communicate, with the horse rescue through text messages.

# Overview of the Sample

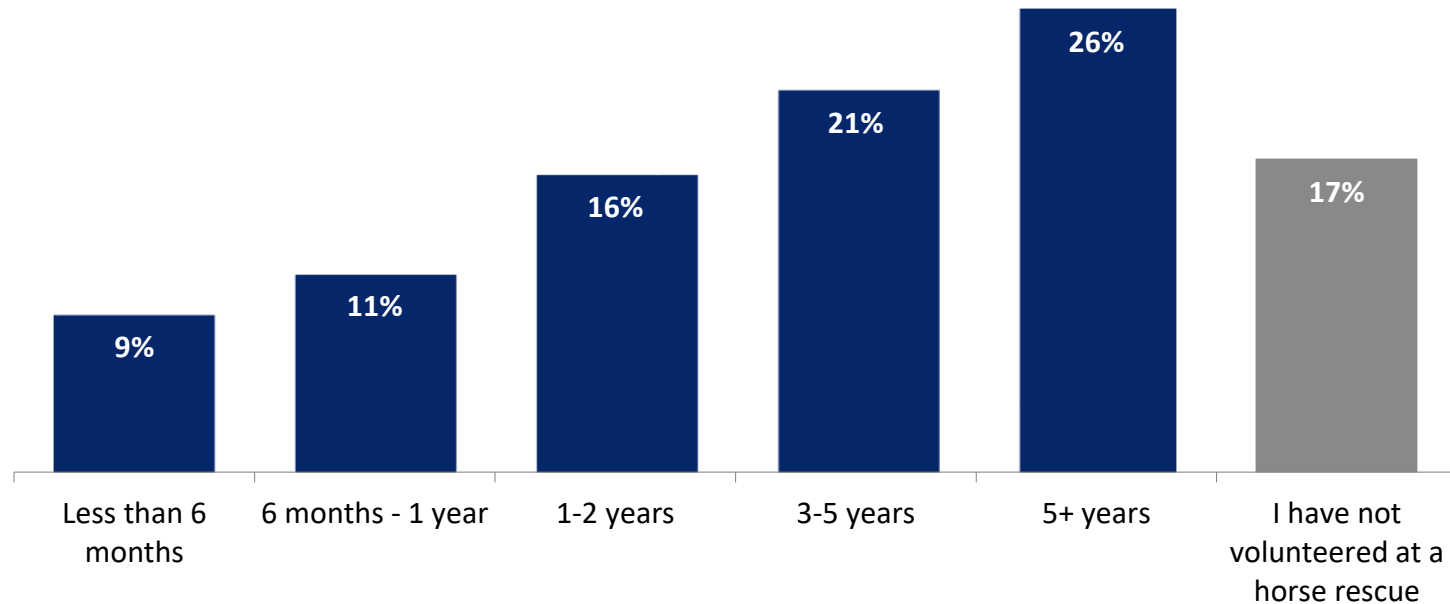




# Volunteer Experience

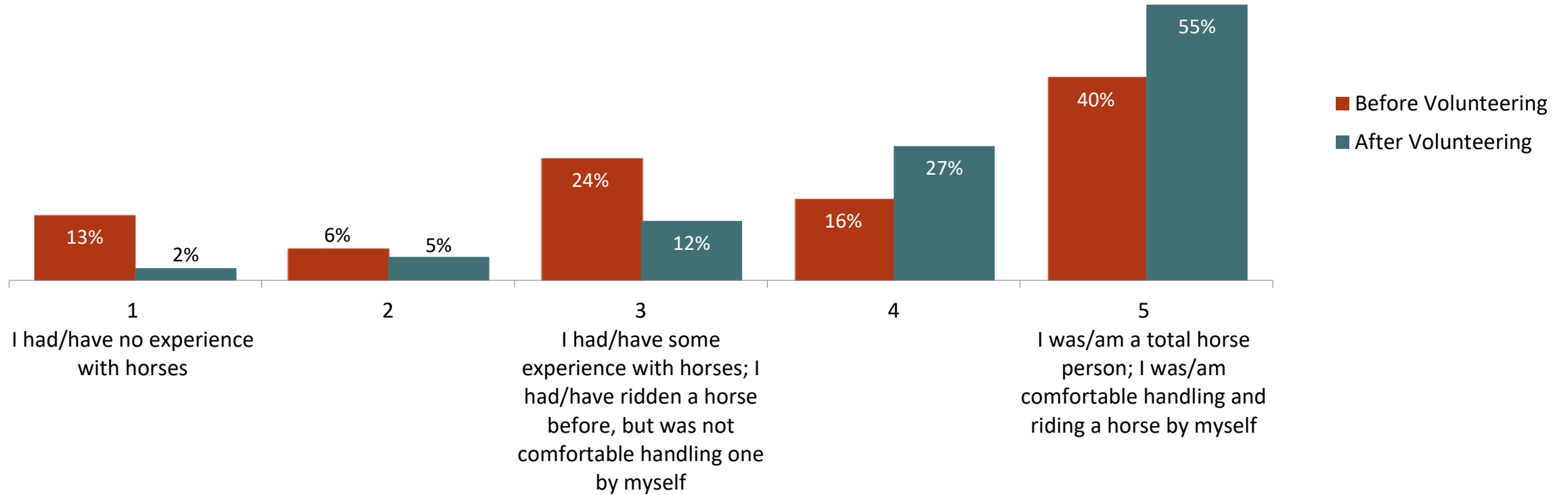
# Length of Volunteering

Nearly half of the respondents (47%) have been volunteers for three or more years, underscoring a large presence of long-term volunteers. Meanwhile, a smaller segment (20%) has been volunteering for less than a year, possibly highlighting limited influx of new volunteers.



# Level of Horse Experience Among Volunteers

Prior to volunteering at a horse rescue, 40% of respondents identified as a total horse person, while the remaining 60% represented a mixed range of experience levels. Following their volunteer experience, respondents demonstrated a shift towards higher experience levels, with the majority (55%) now identifying as a total horse person.



Before volunteering at a horse rescue, how would you rate your level of horse experience?

How would you rate your current level of horse experience?





# Volunteer Expectations & Time Commitment

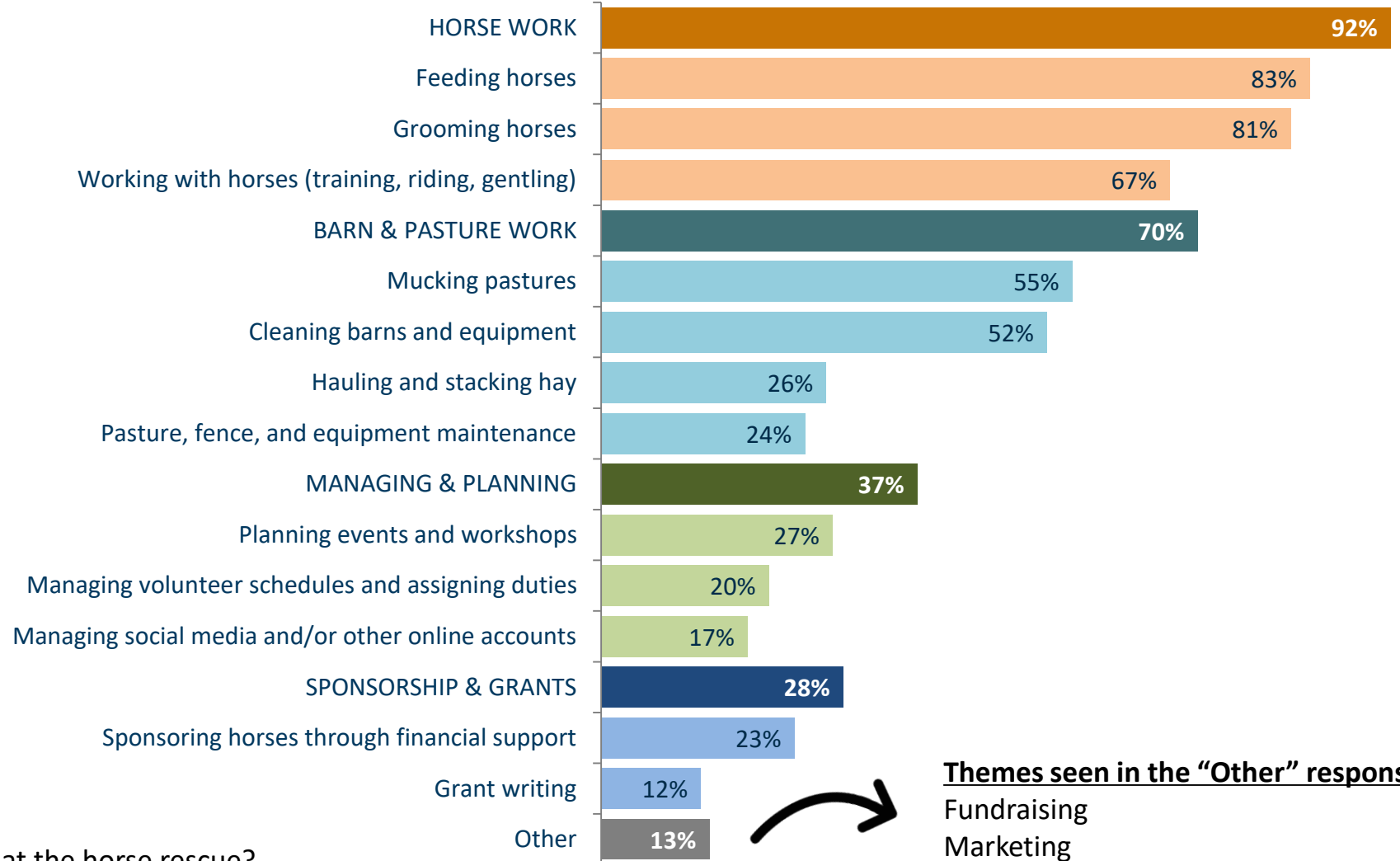
# Preferred Volunteer Duties



Horse rescue volunteers exhibit a strong inclination toward hands-on engagement, with 92% expressing interest in direct horse-related activities and 70% in the maintenance of barns and pastures.

Notably, close to 40% express enthusiasm for overseeing events, managing volunteers, and handling online accounts.

Additionally, nearly a quarter express a desire to contribute financially by sponsoring horses.

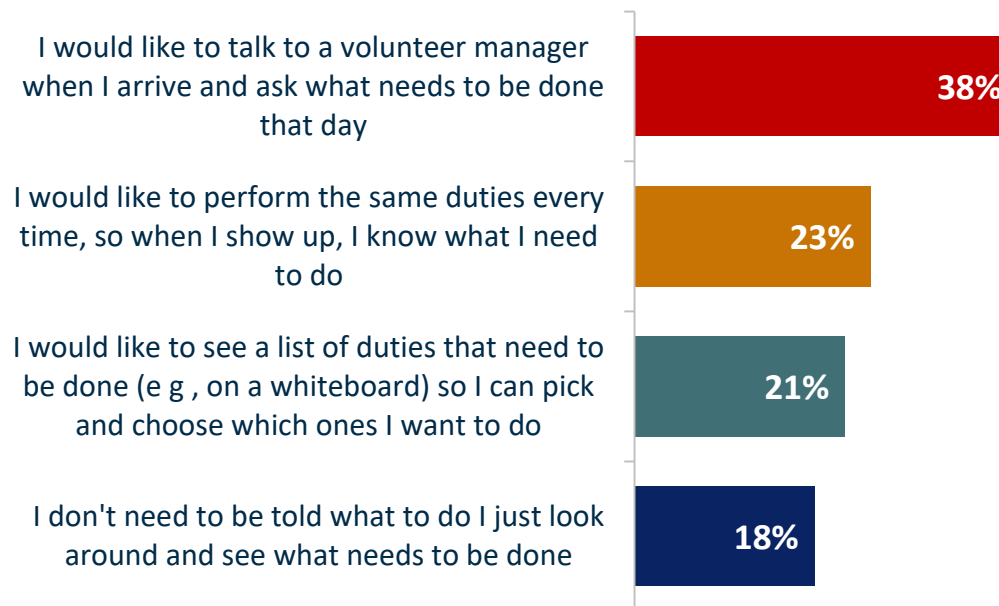


What volunteer duties are you most interested in at the horse rescue?

# Duty Assignment



When asked about their preferred duty assignment methods, nearly 4-in-10 respondents express a preference for one-on-one instruction from a volunteer manager. Approximately 2-in-10 respondents favor either consistent duties with each visit or the option to select duties from a posted list. A smaller yet noteworthy segment, representing 18%, assert their ability to recognize tasks on their own, without a specific duty assignment.



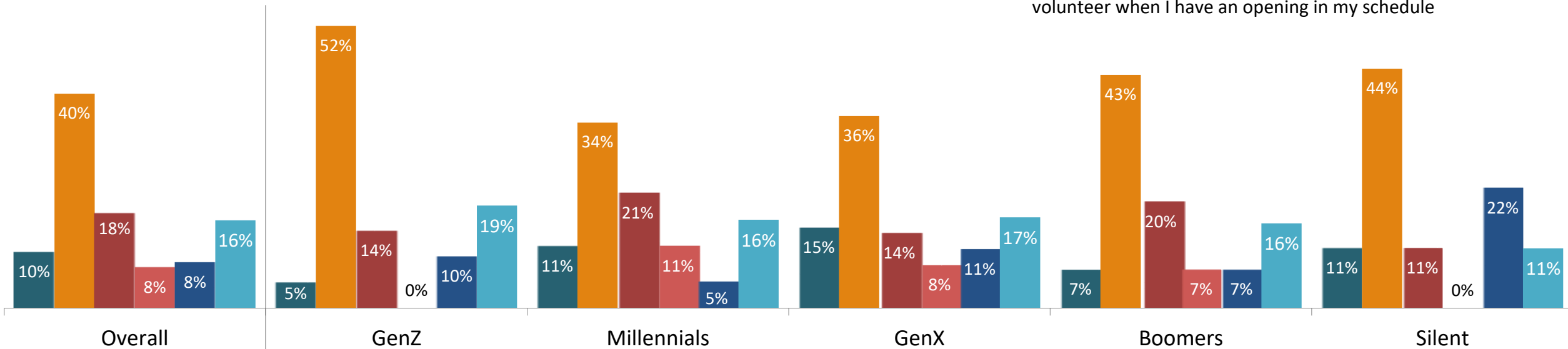
When you show up to volunteer, how would you like to be assigned your duties?

# Time Commitment



Across all generations, a majority, particularly among Gen Z, express a willingness to dedicate 3-5 hours per week to volunteering. Generally, respondents are less inclined to commit to more extended periods, except for the Silent Generation, where 22% indicate a capacity for a substantial commitment of 15 or more hours per week.

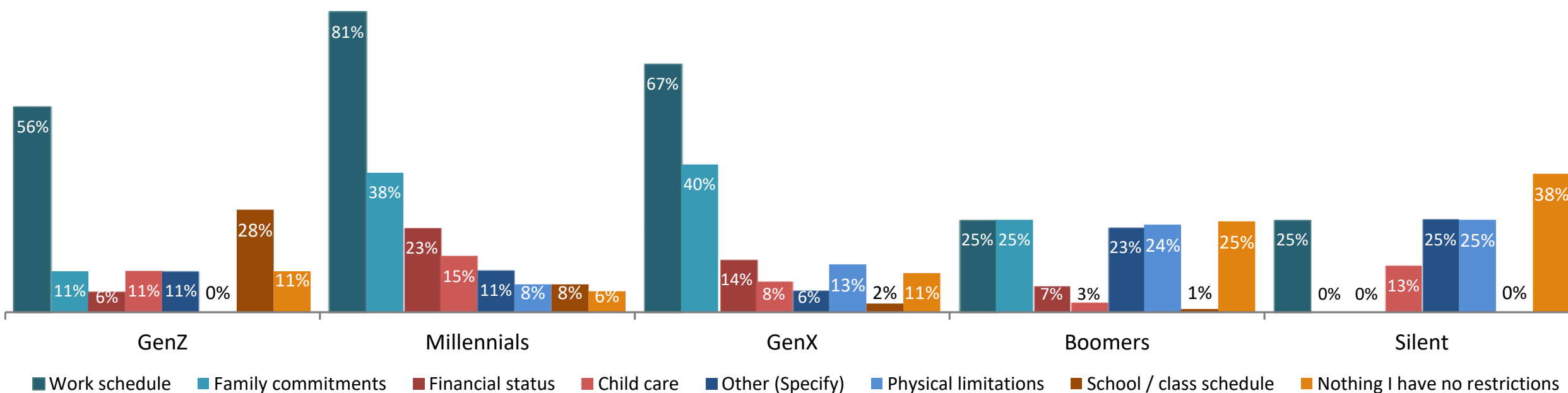
- I can commit to 1-2 hours/week
- I can commit to 3-5 hours/week
- I can commit to 6-10 hours/week
- I can commit to 11-15 hours/week
- I can commit to 15+ hours/week
- I can't commit to a set amount time, but I'd like to show up and volunteer when I have an opening in my schedule



How much time are you willing to dedicate as a volunteer?

# Time Restrictions

Among the factors limiting respondents' ability to volunteer more often, work schedules emerge as a primary constraint, particularly for Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X. Family commitments also pose a large restriction across Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers, while school schedules also pose a large restriction across Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers, while school schedules present challenges for Gen Z. Interestingly, the Silent generation experiences relatively fewer time restrictions.



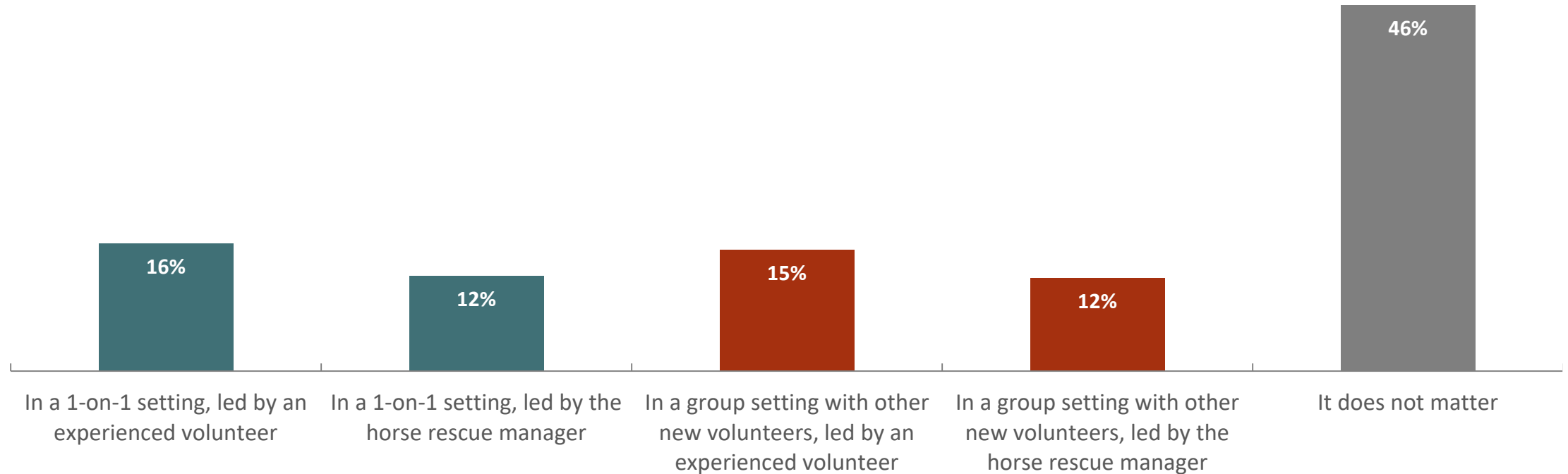
What prevents you from volunteering more often?

# Training / Education Preferences

# Orientation Training Method



Respondents have minimal preference regarding the structure of their orientation training, with a large 46% expressing that it does not matter. Among those with a preference, opinions are fairly divided between 1-on-1 sessions and group settings, as well as between training led by an experienced volunteer and that led by a horse rescue manager.

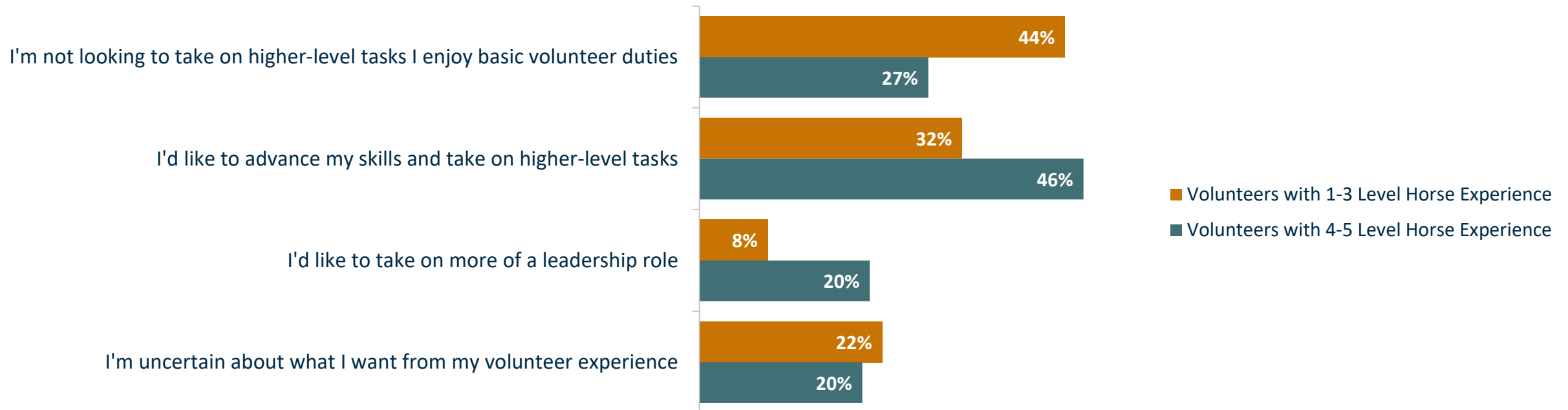


When starting your volunteer work at the horse rescue, how would you prefer your orientation training to be done?

# Direction of Volunteer Role



Volunteers with more horse experience are more inclined to elevate their skills and take on more advanced tasks (46%), with 20% expressing a desire for leadership roles. Conversely, volunteers with less horse experience are more prone to find contentment in their current basic volunteer duties (44%), although 32% still express interest in advancing their skills and engaging in higher-level tasks. Additionally, about 1-in-5 overall express uncertainty regarding how they see their volunteer role evolving over time.



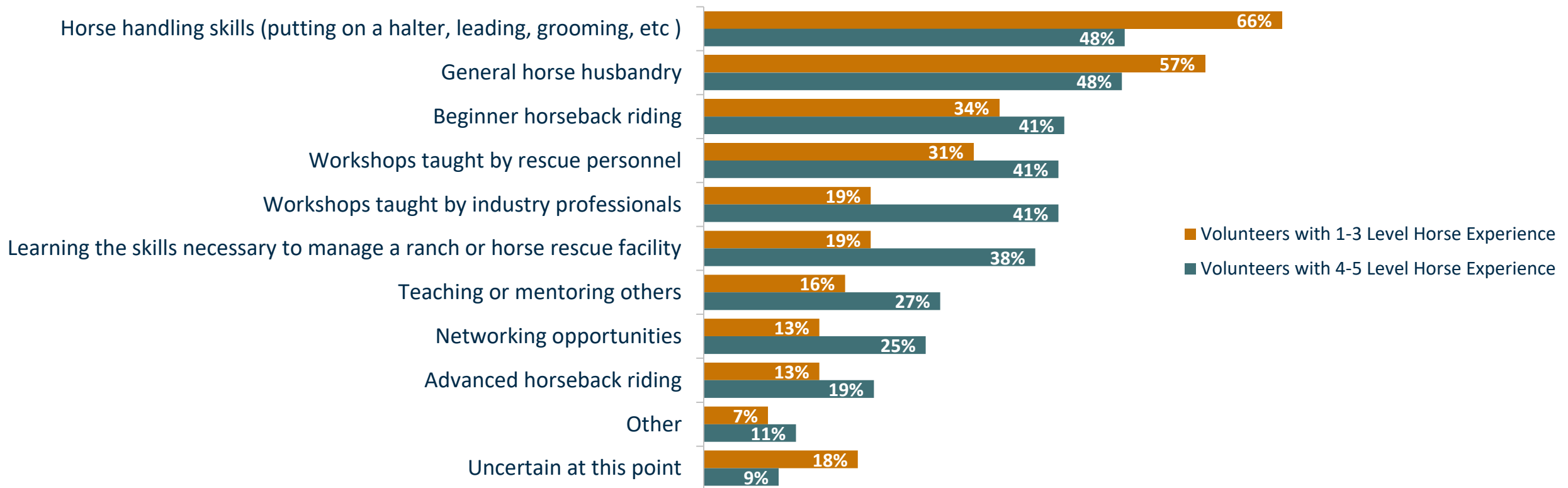
How do you see your volunteer role changing over time?



# Desired Training Experiences



In alignment with their duty preferences, volunteers exhibit a large interest in training that involves direct horse work, which is even more pronounced among those with limited horse experience. Meanwhile, volunteers possessing greater horse experience express an interest in participating in workshops, mentorship opportunities, and learning skills to manage horse ranch/rescue.

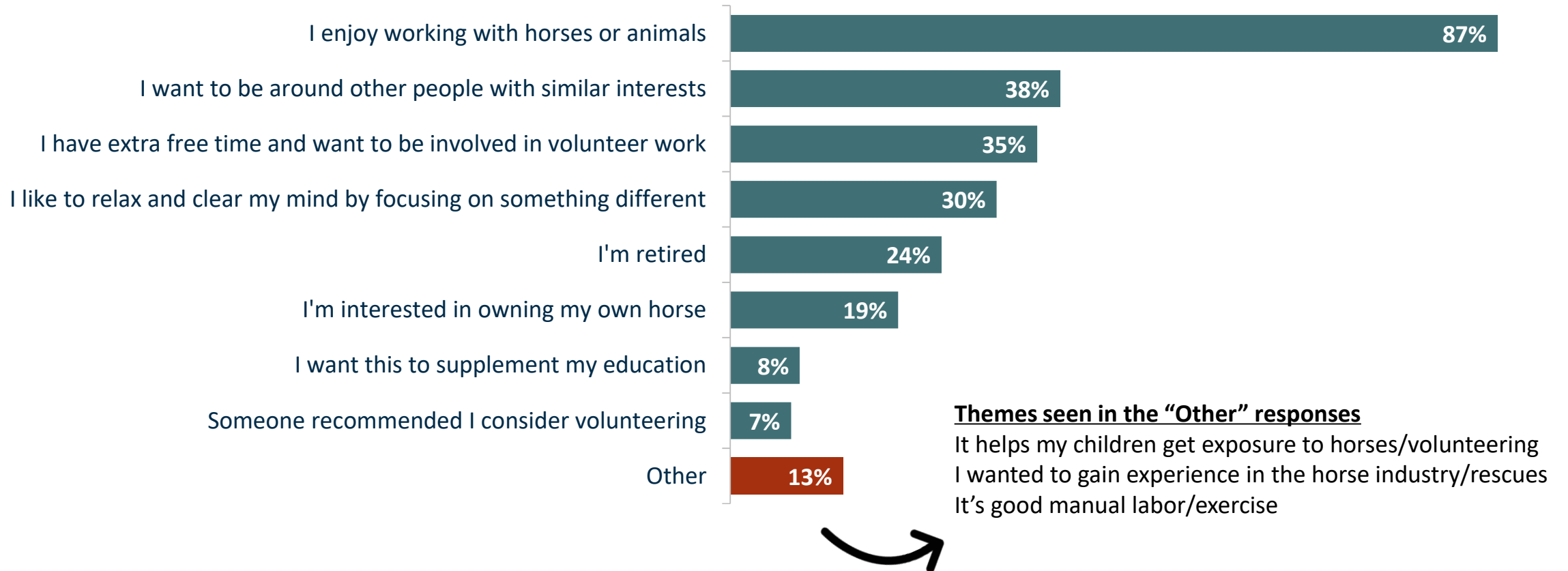


Thinking long-term, what type of training or experiences do you hope to gain from being a volunteer?

# Recruitment & Incentives

# Initial Reason for Volunteering

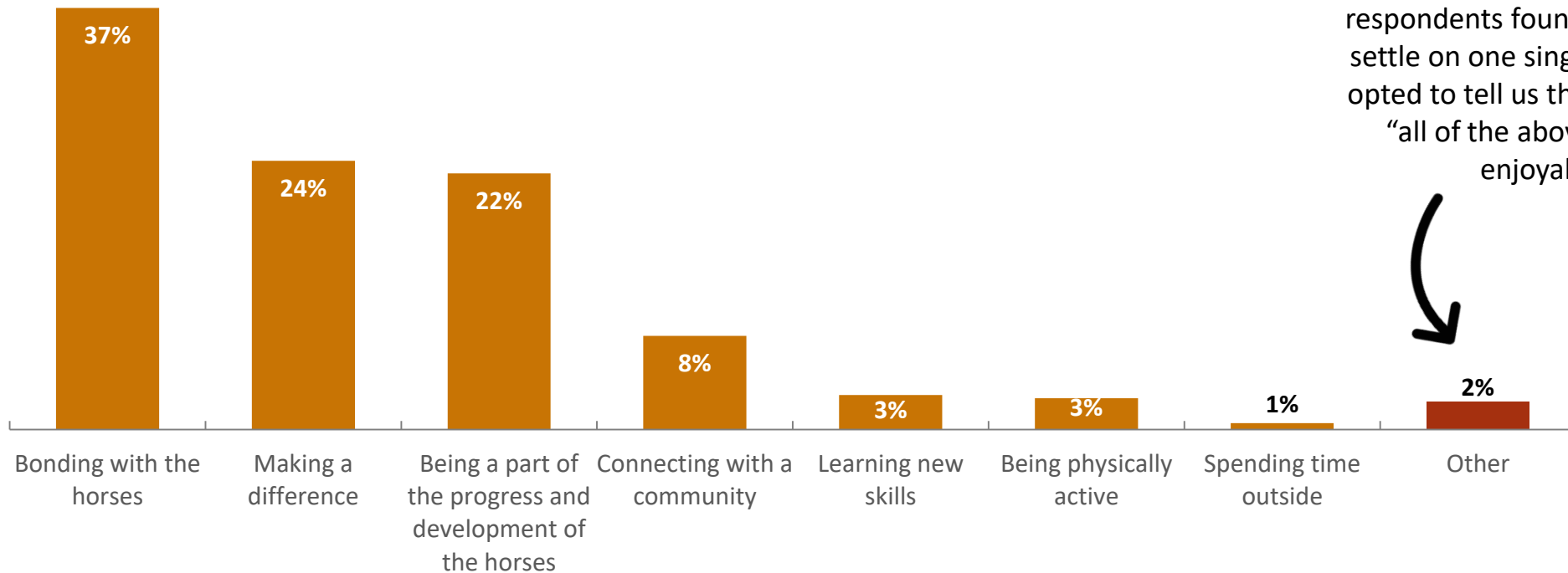
Nearly 9-in-10 respondents first considered volunteering at a horse rescue because they enjoy working with horses and animals.



What prompted you to first consider volunteering?

# Rewarding Aspects of Volunteering

When assessing the rewarding aspects of their horse rescue volunteer position, respondents pointed towards the ability to bond with horses (37%), making a difference (24%), and being part the progress and development of horses (22%).



Charmingly, seven of the respondents found it limiting to settle on one single aspect and opted to tell us that they found "all of the above" equally enjoyable.

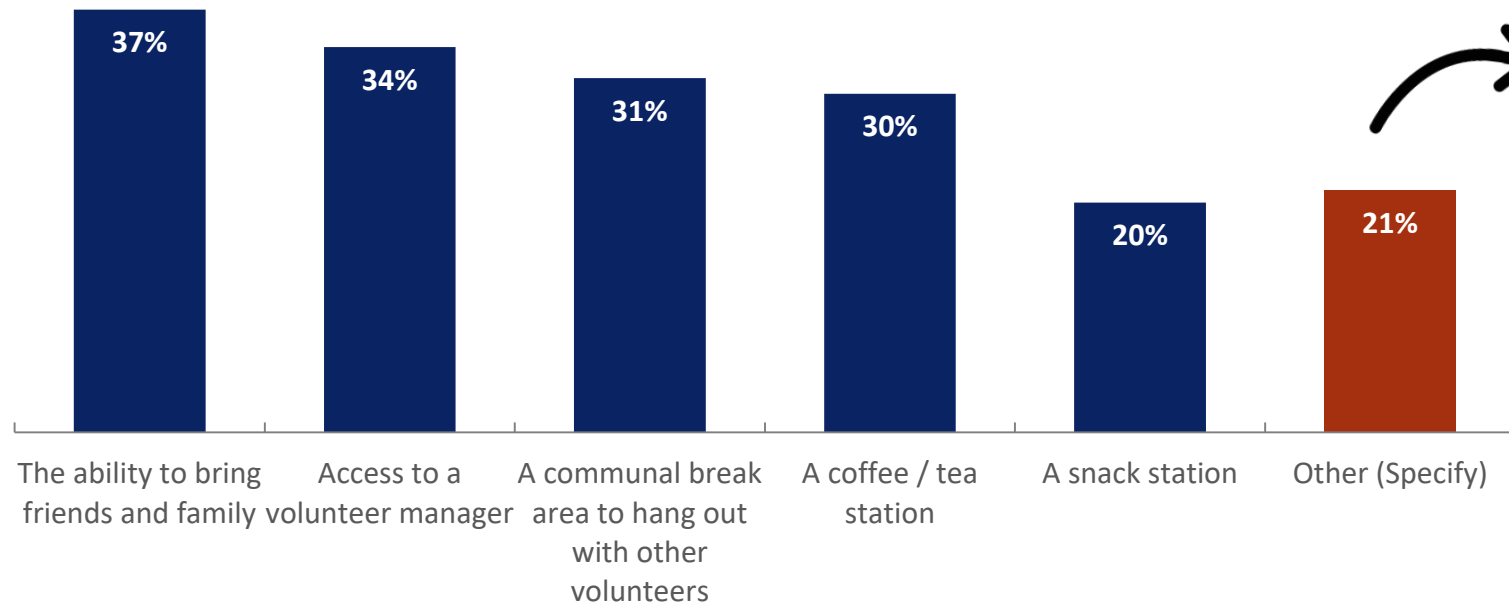


Overall, what is the single most enjoyable or rewarding aspect of volunteering?

# On-Site Features to Facilitate an Enjoyable Volunteer Experience



Volunteers express a high interest in personal interactions at the horse rescue, whether it be through the ability to bring friends and family (37%) or having a break area to hang out with other volunteers (31%). On par with their preference to receive daily instructions directly from a volunteer manager, 34% also wish to have access to a volunteer manager while on site. The responses also highlight the importance of having access to basic features such as a coffee/tea station, water, bathroom, and heating and cooling.



## Themes seen in the "Other" responses

- More time with horses
- A water station
- Access to bathrooms
- Access to heating / air conditioning
- Equipment (that is not broken)
- Organization (of barn layout & tools)
- Clear instructions/communication
- Systematic routines

When you show up to volunteer, what are some things that would make your experience more enjoyable?

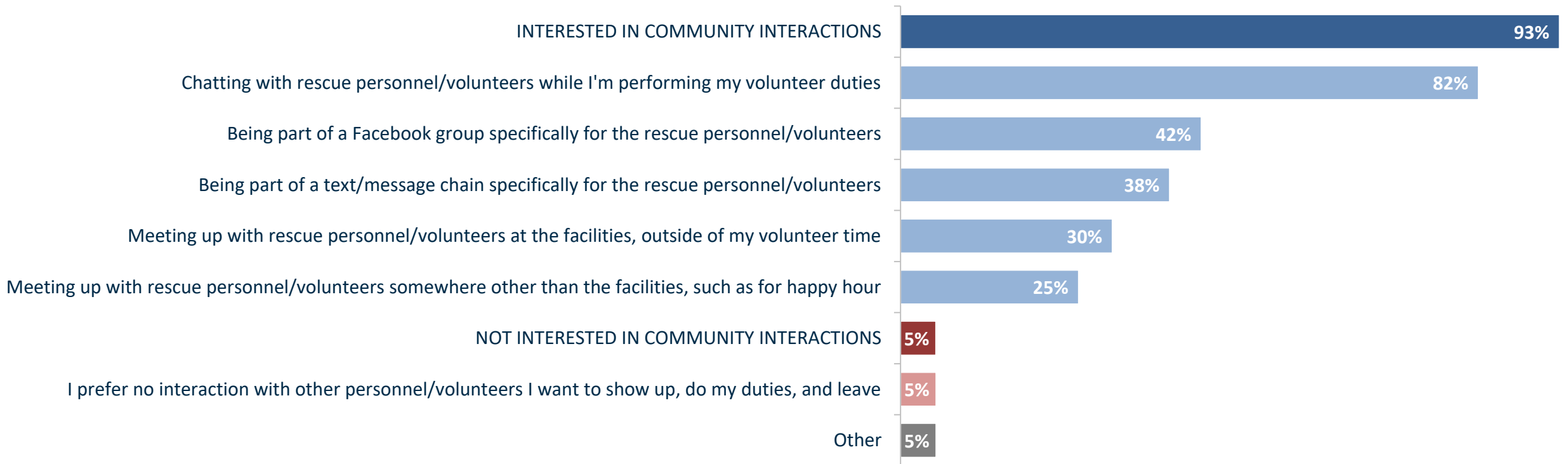


# Community Building

# Community Building Among Volunteers



The majority of volunteers (93%) actively seek community building engagement, with a minimal 5% expressing a lack of interest; 82% welcome these interactions while performing their volunteer duties, while under half prefer community engagement through platforms such as Facebook groups, message chains, or after-hours/off-site meet-ups.



When it comes to engaging with other rescue personnel/volunteers, what types of interactions are you hoping to have?

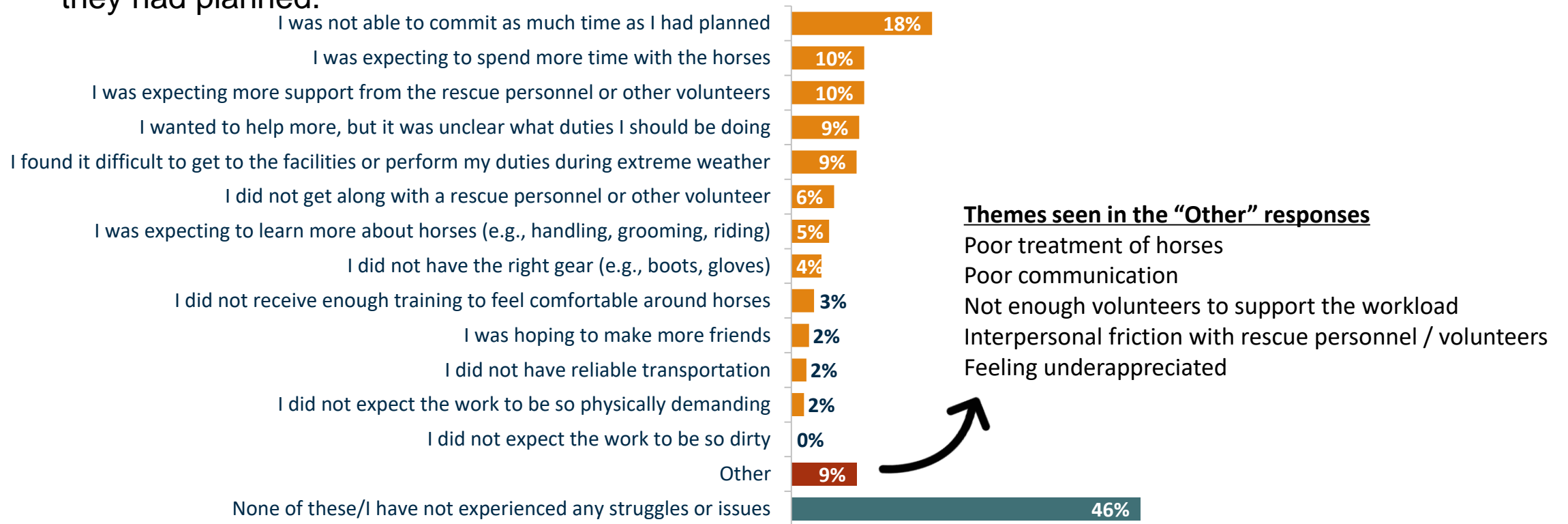
# Challenges & Dropoff



# Challenges of Volunteering



Close to half of the respondents (46%) reported that they have not faced any issues when volunteering. Among those who encountered challenges, the incidence of issues directly tied to the rescue itself remained notably low, at 10% or less. The most common challenge, reported at 18%, was not being able to commit as much time volunteering as they had planned.

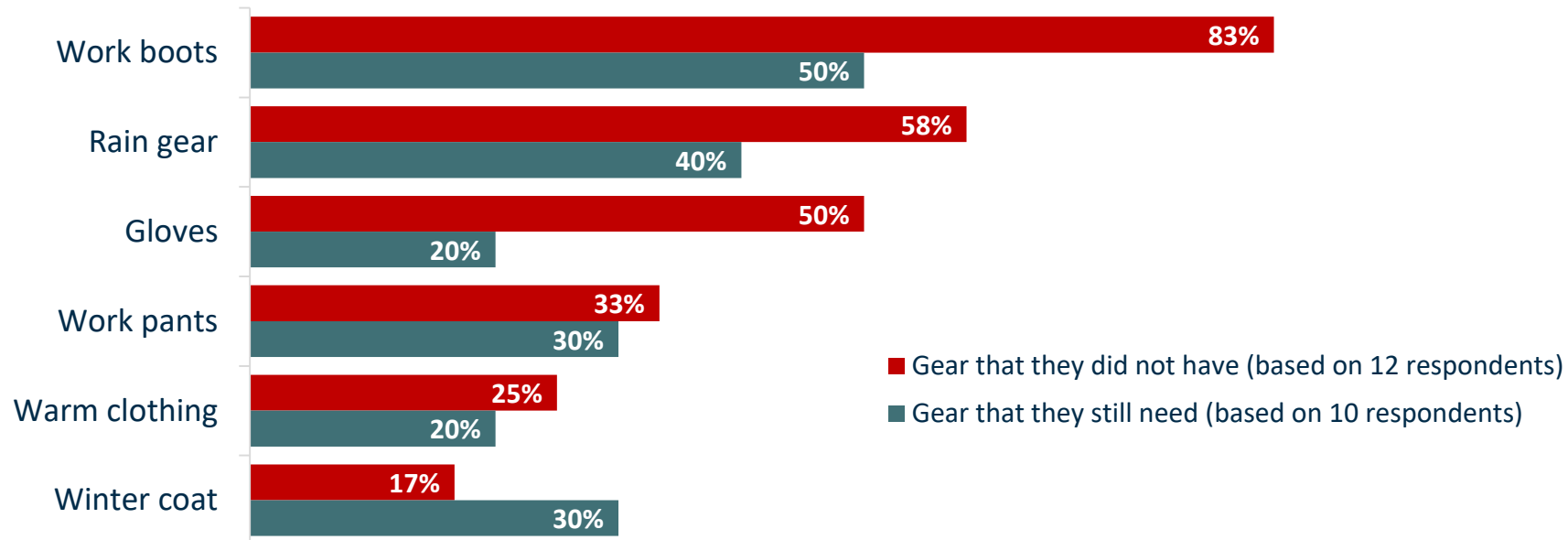


What are some of the challenges you have faced when volunteering at a horse rescue?

# Gear as a Challenge



Among the 4% of respondents who faced challenges related to not having the right gear, work boots emerged as the most commonly reported item that volunteers did not have when first volunteering (83%) and still need (50%).



What type of gear did you NOT have that would have made it easier to perform your volunteer duties?

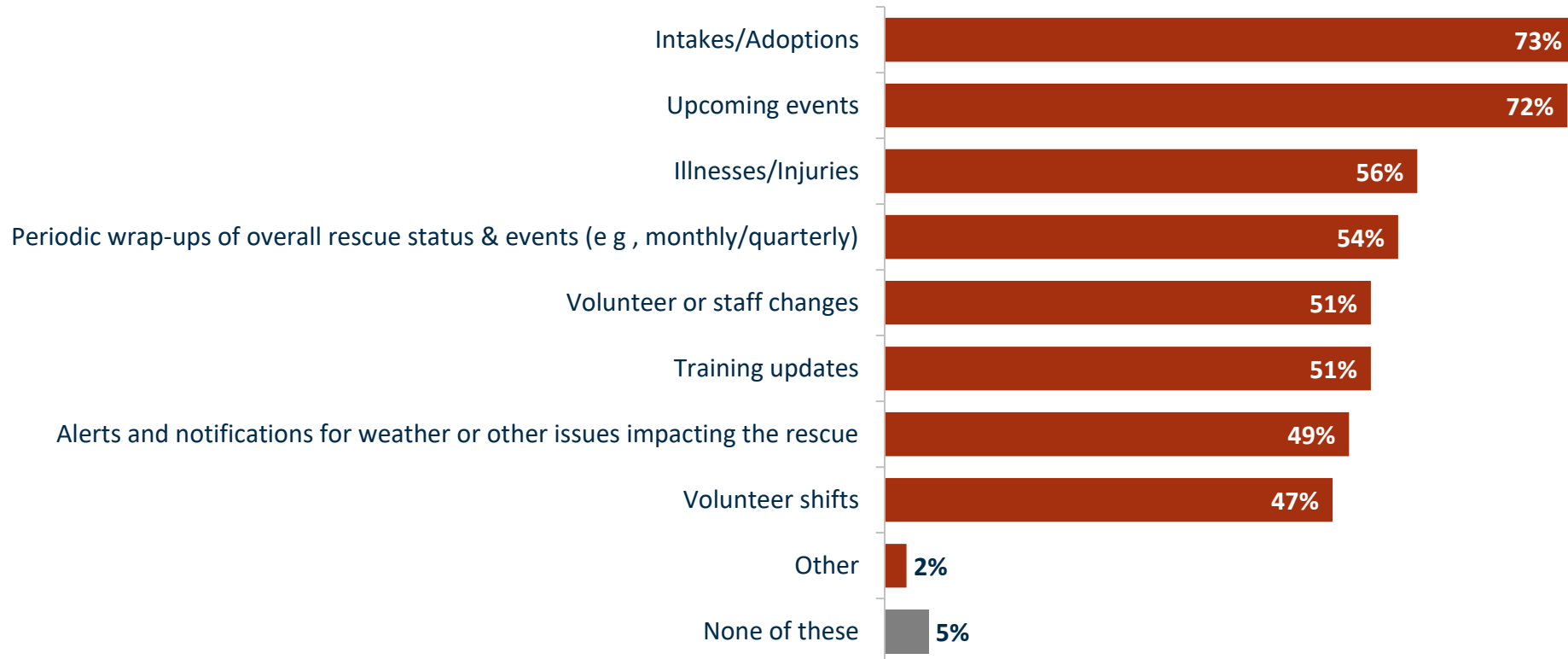
Similarly, is there gear that you need that would help you to better adjust to weather conditions in the area you live in and enable you to spend more time volunteering even if the weather conditions are unfavorable?



# Communication

# Vital Information

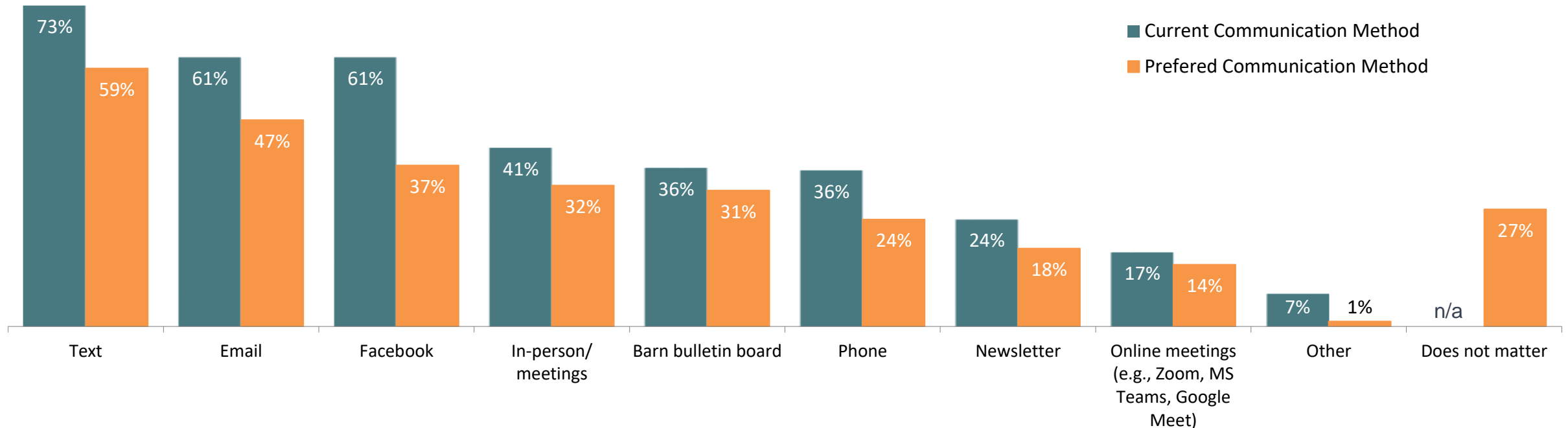
To stay well-informed about the rescue's activities, volunteers place a high amount of value on receiving a range of information, particularly emphasizing the importance of receiving updates about intakes/adoptions and upcoming events.



What information do you need to stay informed and integrated in the horse rescue even when you are not present?

# Communication Methods

The majority of volunteers are currently receiving (73%) and prefer to receive (59%) communication from the horse rescue via text messages. Email and Facebook are also commonly utilized, but less than half of volunteers prefer these methods. Notably, nearly 3-in-10 do not have a preference when it comes to communication methods.



In which of the following ways, if any, do you receive communications from the horse rescue?  
 And which of the following ways, if any, would you prefer to receive communications from the horse rescue?

**Summary &  
Recommendations**



## Summary & Recommendations



1. Meet volunteers where they are at:
  - Though most volunteers are looking to work directly with the horses, other responsibilities preferences may vary, depending horse experience level
  - Desired training experiences may vary, depending horse experience level
  - Time commitments may vary based on age, work schedules, or family commitments
2. Provide access to a dedicated volunteer manager
  - This person should be available when volunteers are on-site, especially for assigning duties when volunteers arrive
  - This person should have great communication & organization skills
3. Provide access to basic on-site amenities
4. Though volunteers enjoy interacting with the rescue community, don't expect much engagement outside of their regular volunteer schedule
5. Communicate with volunteers through text messages and keep them up-to-date with intakes/adoptions and upcoming events
6. Let volunteers know that they are appreciated