

What is the role of  
recreational therapists  
incorporating equines to  
benefit humans  
and how does it relate to other  
therapies?

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# Acknowledgements



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American Therapeutic Recreation Association Equine Assisted Services Task Force  
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# GAP in Research

What is the extent the CTRS use equine-assisted interventions in practice?

ATRA competencies study (2019): High-use of animal-assisted therapies (out of hundreds of categories) but type of animal was not asked.

Only 2 geographically limited MS thesis



# What do we know?



- **VA RT self-report (asked to list all that applied):**
  - **63 professionals involved in services incorporating equines,**
  - **53 involved in equine-assisted learning,**
  - **40 involved in horsemanship**
- (Veterans Administration, Personal Communication, 2022).
- **What specialty of EAS are you interested in? (n =525)**
  - **3% Occupational Therapy**
  - **3% Physical Therapy**
  - **8% Psychotherapy**
  - **1% Speech Language Pathology**
  - **11% Recreational Therapy**
- (HHRF-HETI EAS Research Repository Survey , McKelvie, Personal Communication, April 2022),

# Significance: Who cares?



Optimal Terminology for Services that Incorporate Equines: A Consensus Document (Wood et al., 2021)

--Recreational Therapy under Therapy has been added



CTRS are often (but not always) responsible for EAS for veterans in the VA but "equine therapy" grant funding has generated discussion about which discipline(s) are appropriate to provide EAS in mental health.



CTRS professional development : Better understanding of the needs may provide more collaborative opportunities to gain access to excellent and targeted training.



# Research Questions

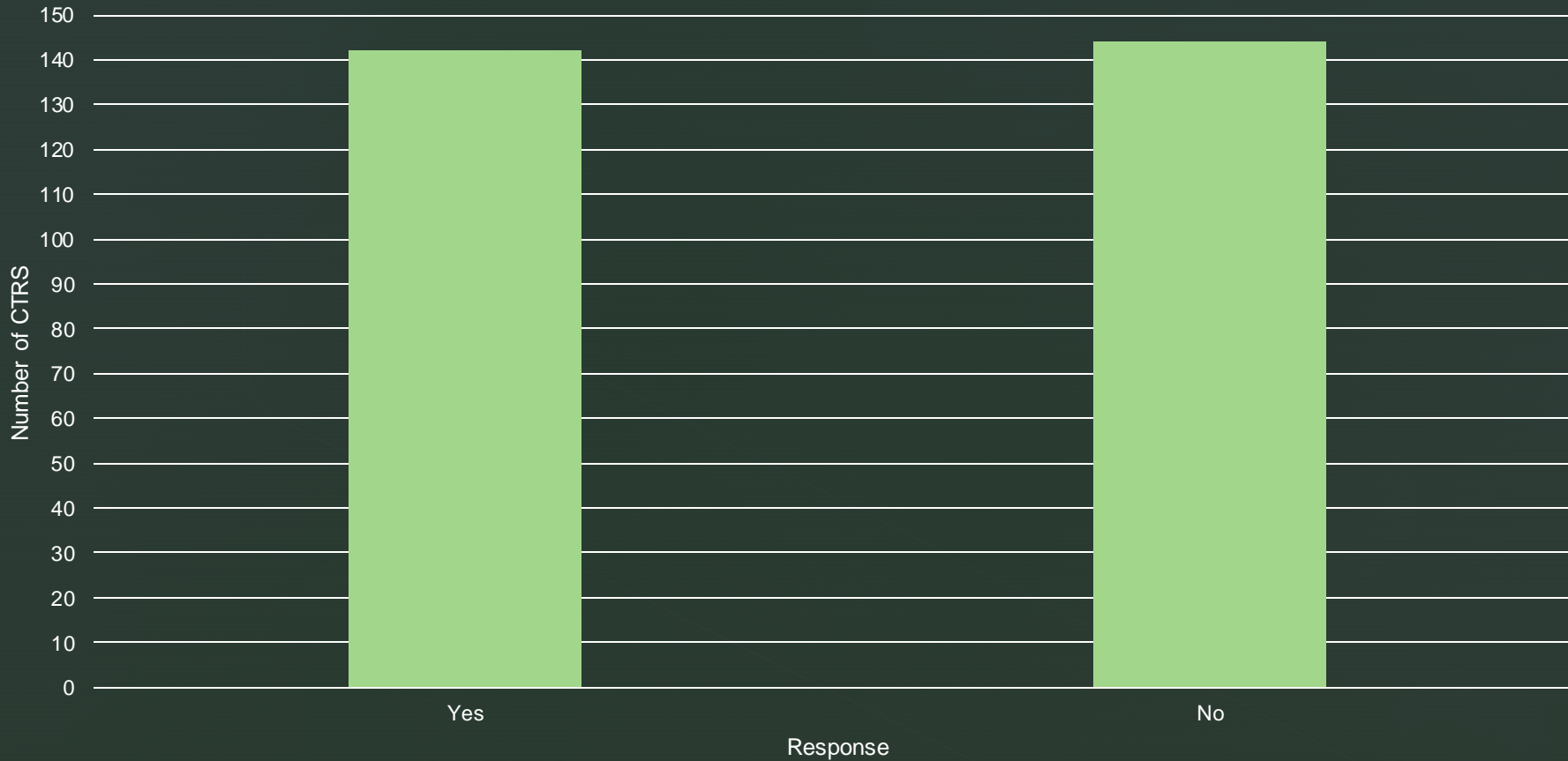
- What is the state of practice for RTs incorporating equines to benefit humans?
- What is the type, frequency, and populations of RTs who are incorporating equines in practice?
- What are the domains, goals, and outcomes that RTs are focusing on when they incorporate equines in practice?
- If they are not incorporating equines, why not?

# Methods

- Survey Design- Pre-tested by Subject Matter Experts
- IRB approved
- Qualtrics link with informed consent
- Sent through NCTRC listserv to 19,000+ CTRS
- No incentive, but reminder sent
- Response rate: 422 opened survey; 291 completed survey
- Descriptive Analysis



Have you ever used equines in your practice as a recreational therapist (CTRS) (this includes taking the clients/patients to a facility that provides services using equines)?




401 individuals opened the survey  
N = 291 completed

Yes 49.14%

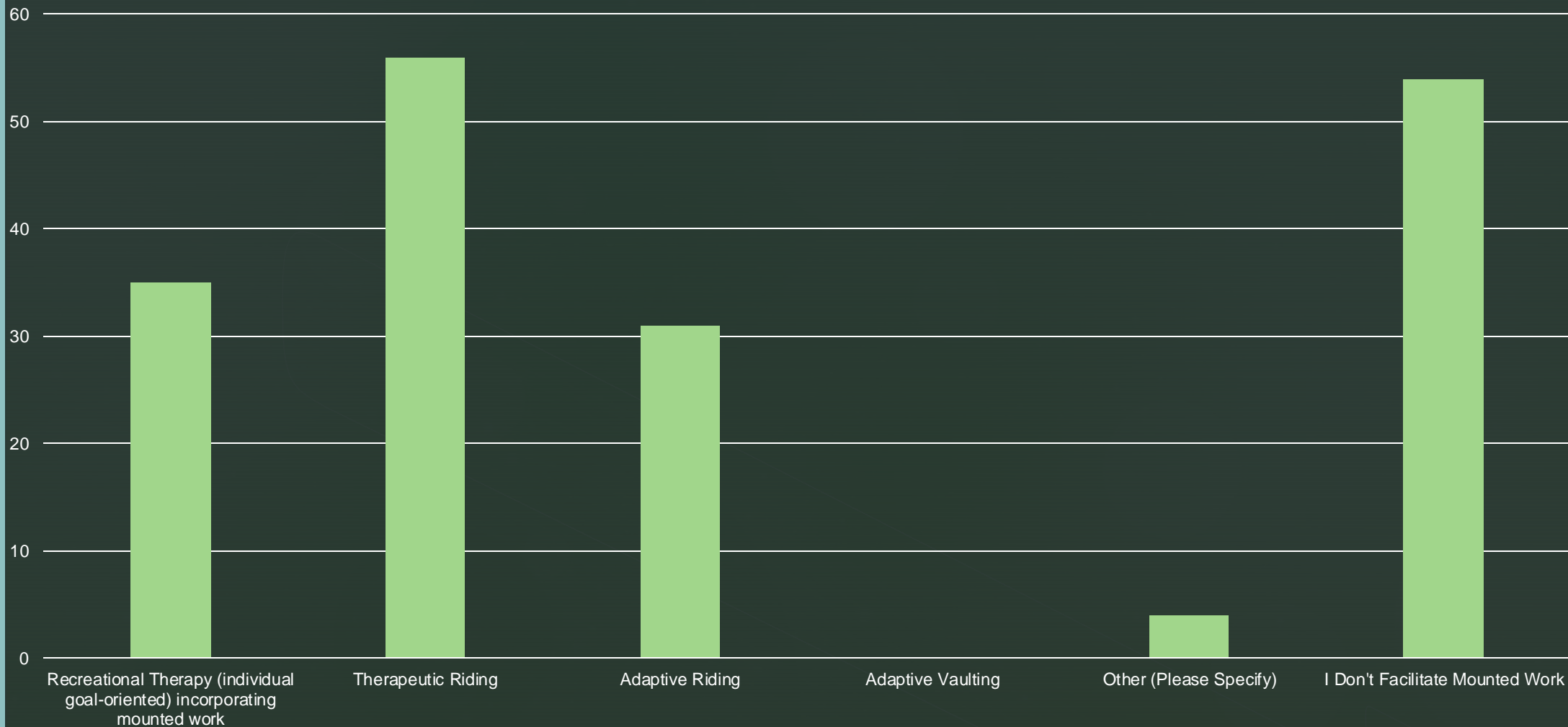
No 50.86%



A person wearing a helmet and a blue hoodie is riding a brown horse in an indoor arena. Two people, a man on the left and a woman on the right, are standing next to the horse, both wearing blue t-shirts with a logo and the year '2019'. The horse is standing on a dirt floor with some blue and black equipment in the foreground. The background shows a wooden door and a wall with a square window. The text 'Results: Mounted Work' is overlaid in white on the image.

# Results: Mounted Work

If you facilitate mounted work/you are the facilitator for the mounted work (humans riding on the equine), in what way do you use the mounted work in recreational therapy practice? Choose as many as apply



Ind = 19.34%

TR = 30.95%

AR = 17.13%

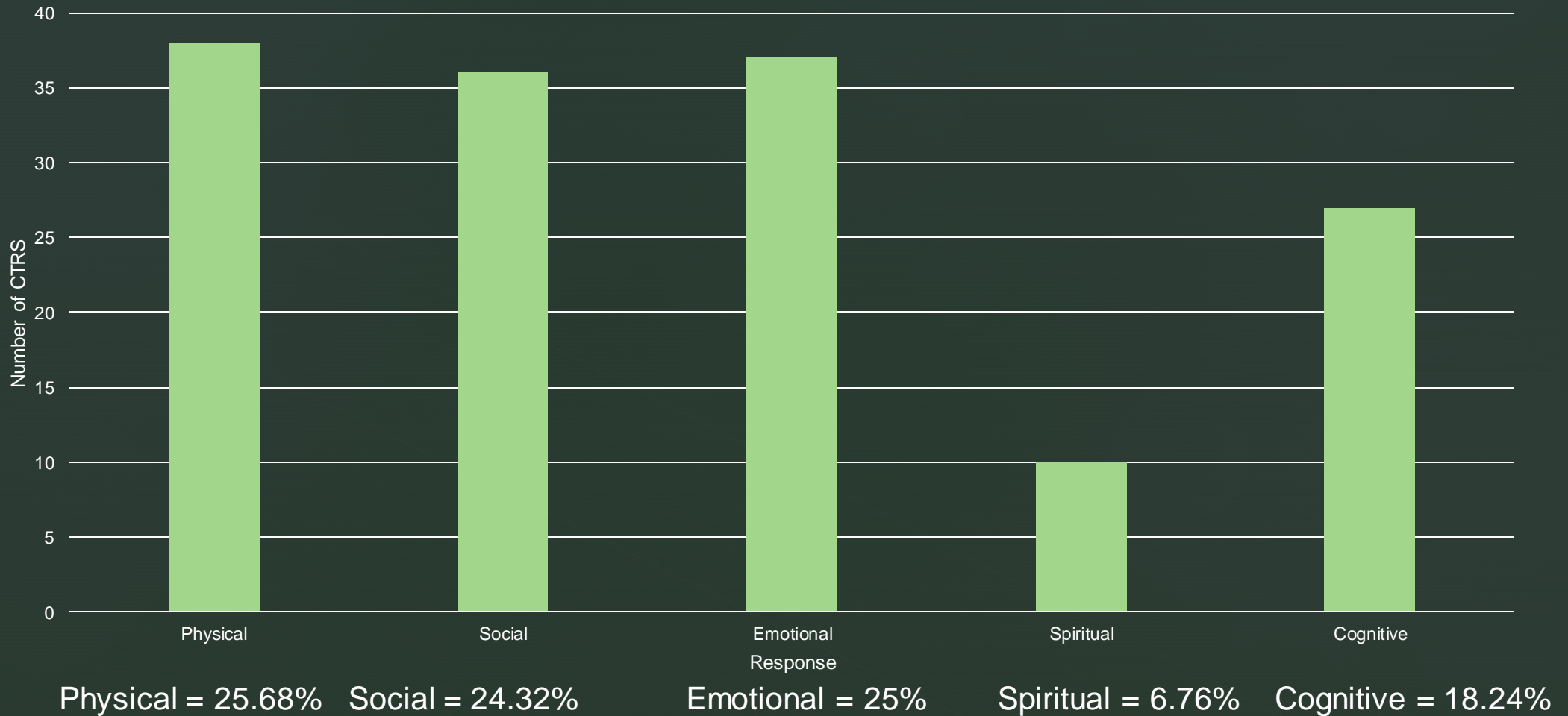
AV = 0

None = 30.39%

27/56 and 27/31 participants checked both Therapeutic Riding and Adaptive Riding

Other: "mental health focus," "equine assisted learning," "application to home environment"

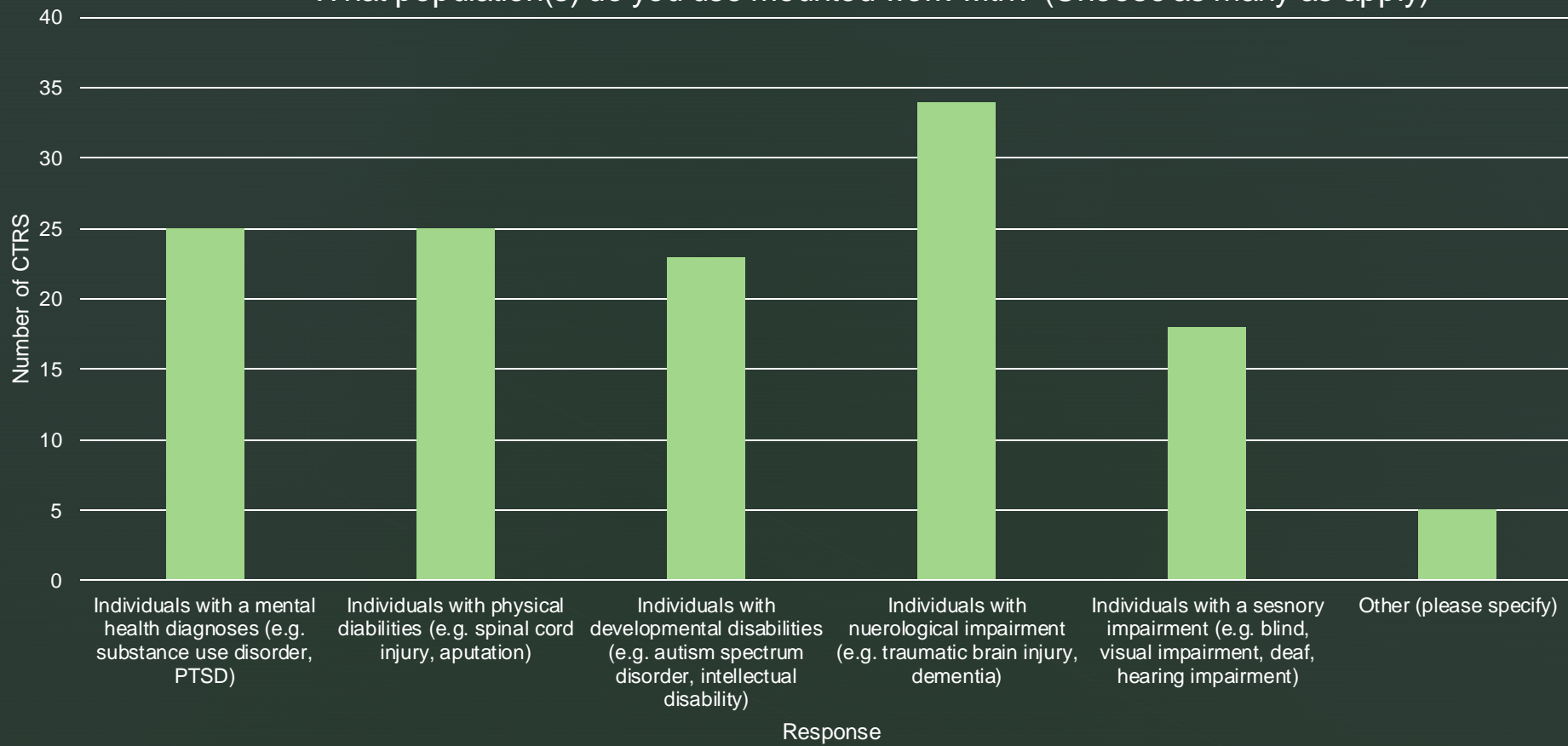
What recreational therapy goal domains are the focus of your mounted work?  
(Choose as many as apply)



What are your primary goal domains?

Physical = 48.84% Social = 13.95% Emotional = 27.91% Spiritual 0% Cognitive = 9.3%

What population(s) do you use mounted work with? (Choose as many as apply)



Mental Health 19.23% Physical Dis. 19.23% Dev. Dis. 17.96% Neurological 26.15% Sensory 13.85%

Other:

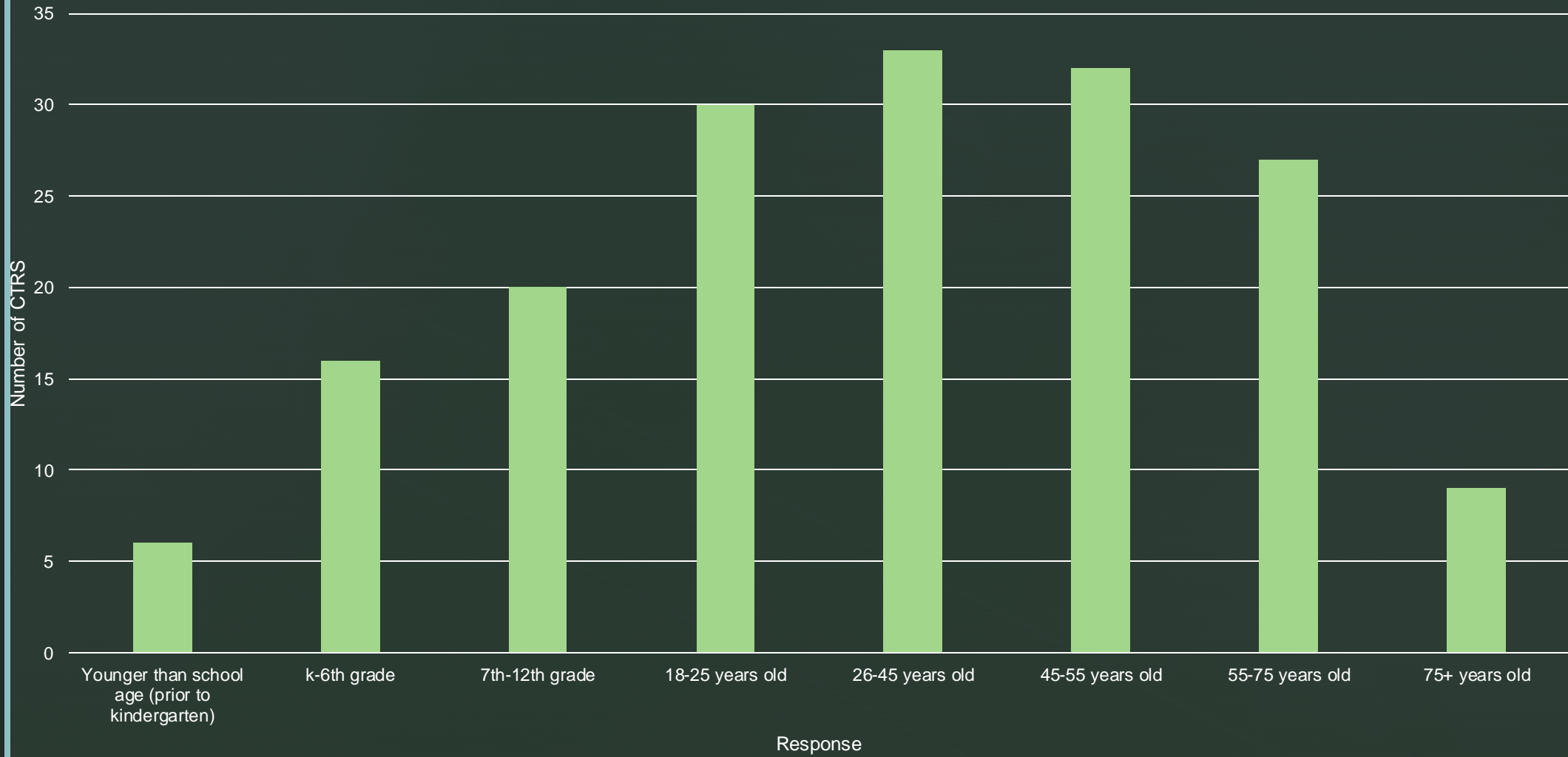
Nursing home veterans

Substance abuse- all veterans

CVA

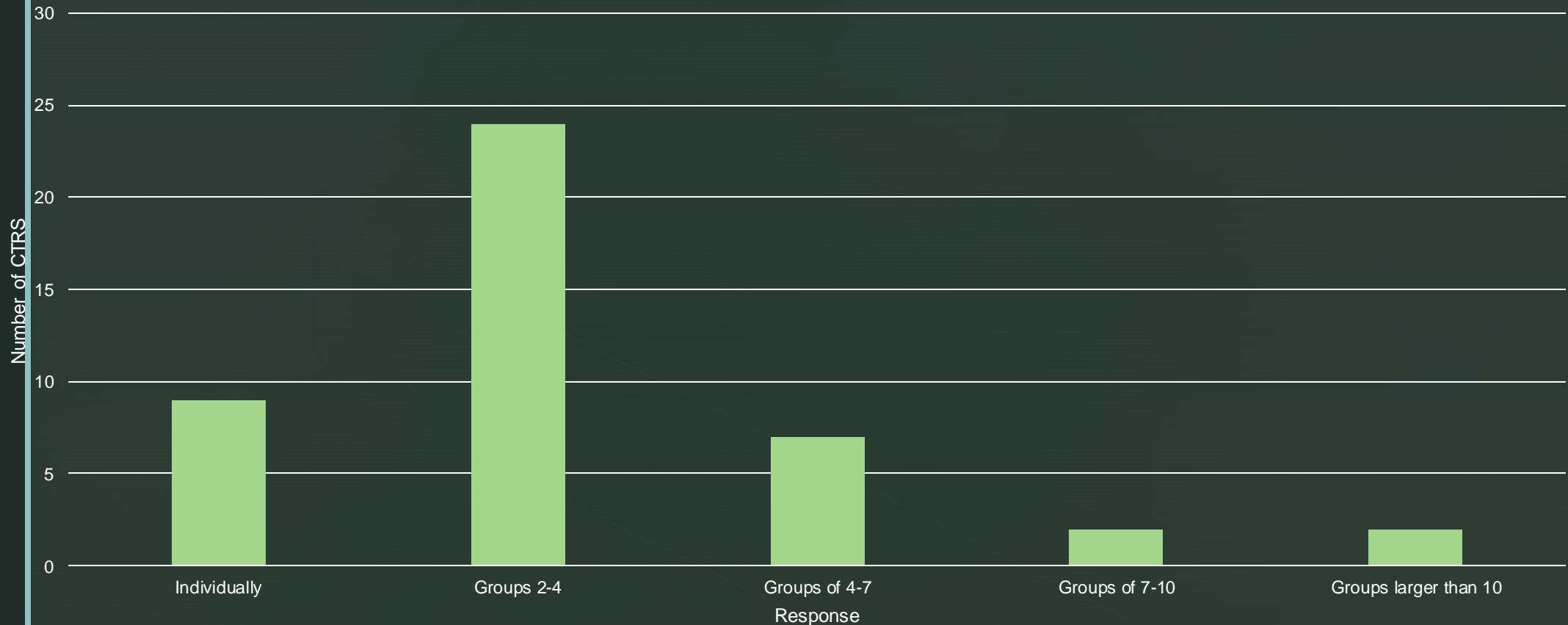
Pediatrics- variety of diagnosis

# What age are the individuals with whom you use mounted work? (Choose as many as apply)



< K 3.47%, K-6<sup>th</sup> 9.25%, 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 11.56%, 18-25 17.34%, 26-45 19.08%, 45-56 18.05%, 56-75 15.61%, 75+ 5.2%

# How many clients do you usually have at one time when you facilitate by incorporating equines into mounted work?



**Individually 20.45%**  
Ind

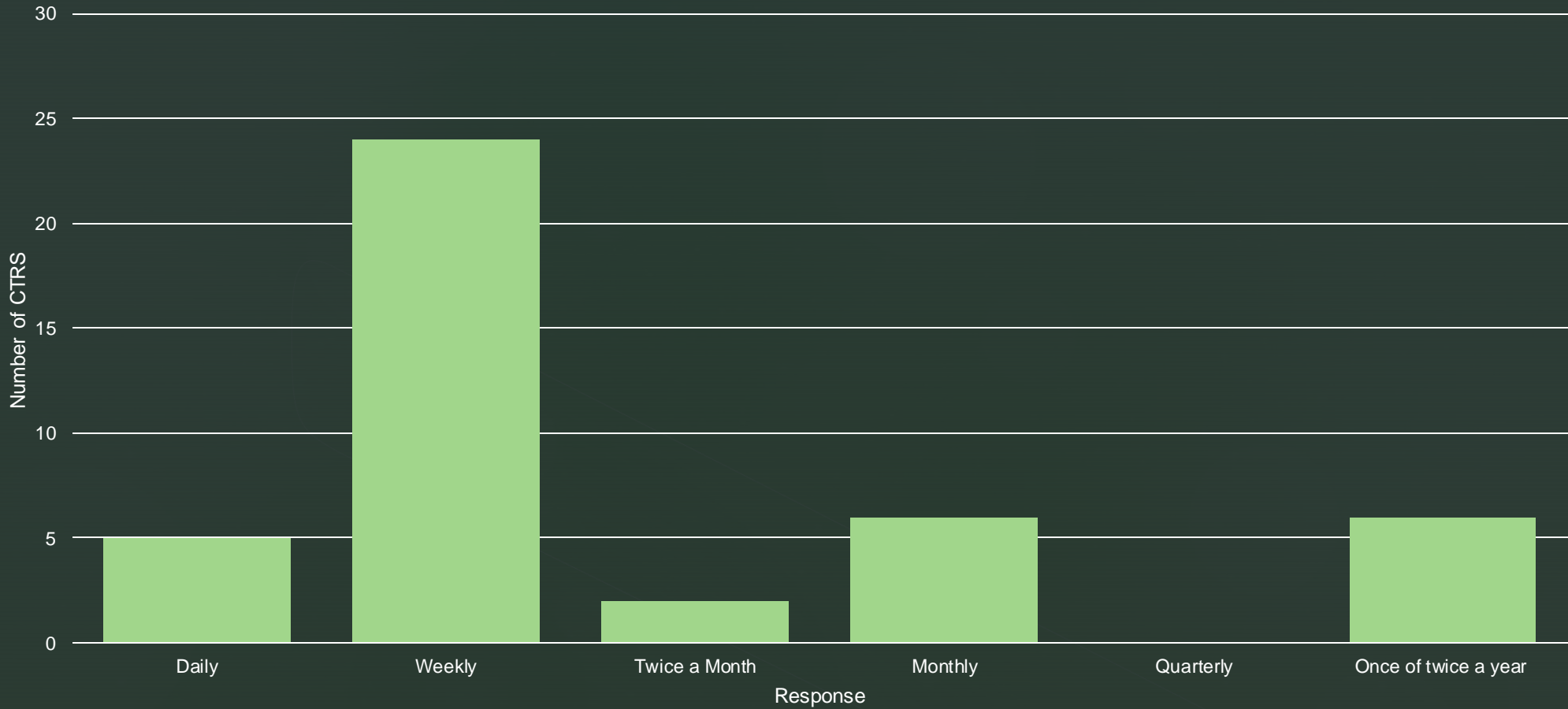
**Groups 2-4 54.55%**

**Groups of 4-7 15.91%**

**Groups of 7-10 4.55%**

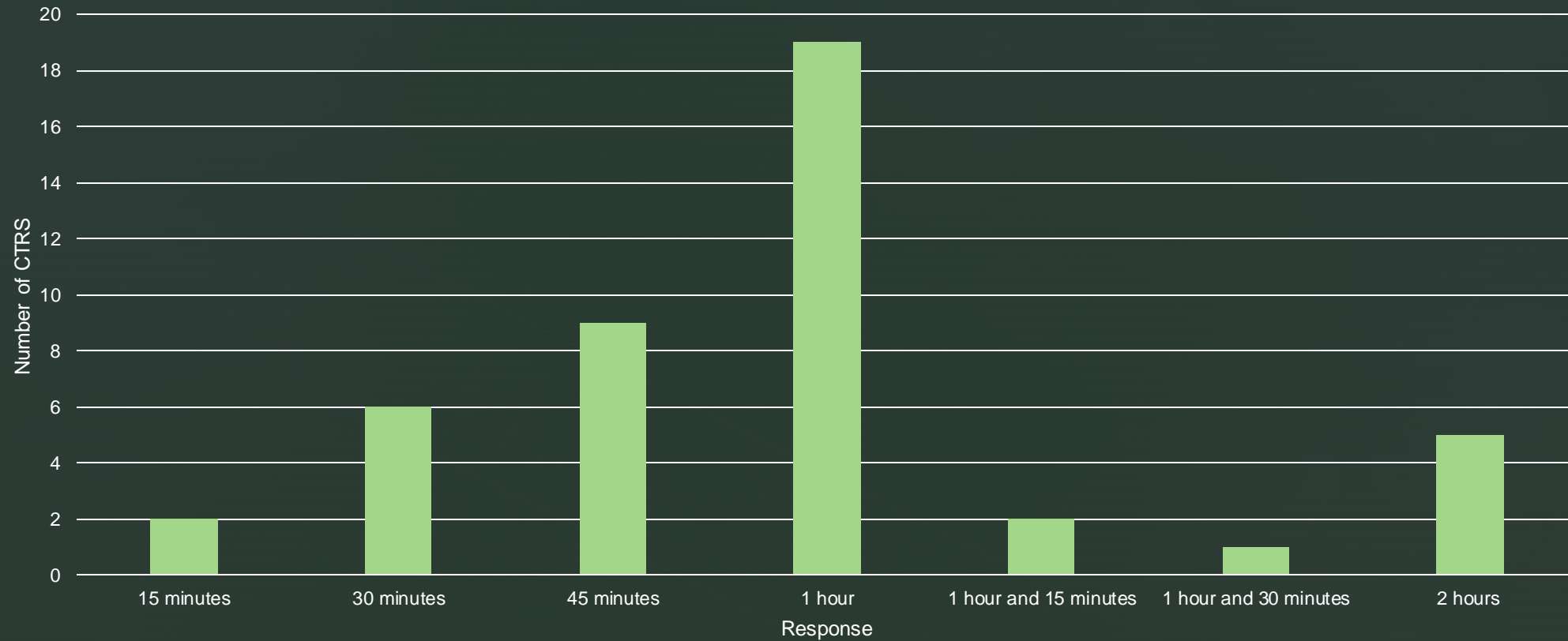
**>10 4.55%**

In general, how often do you typically facilitate by incorporating equines into mounted work per client?



Daily 11.63%    Weekly 55.81%    Twice a Month 4.65%    Monthly 13.95%    Once or Twice a Year 13.95%

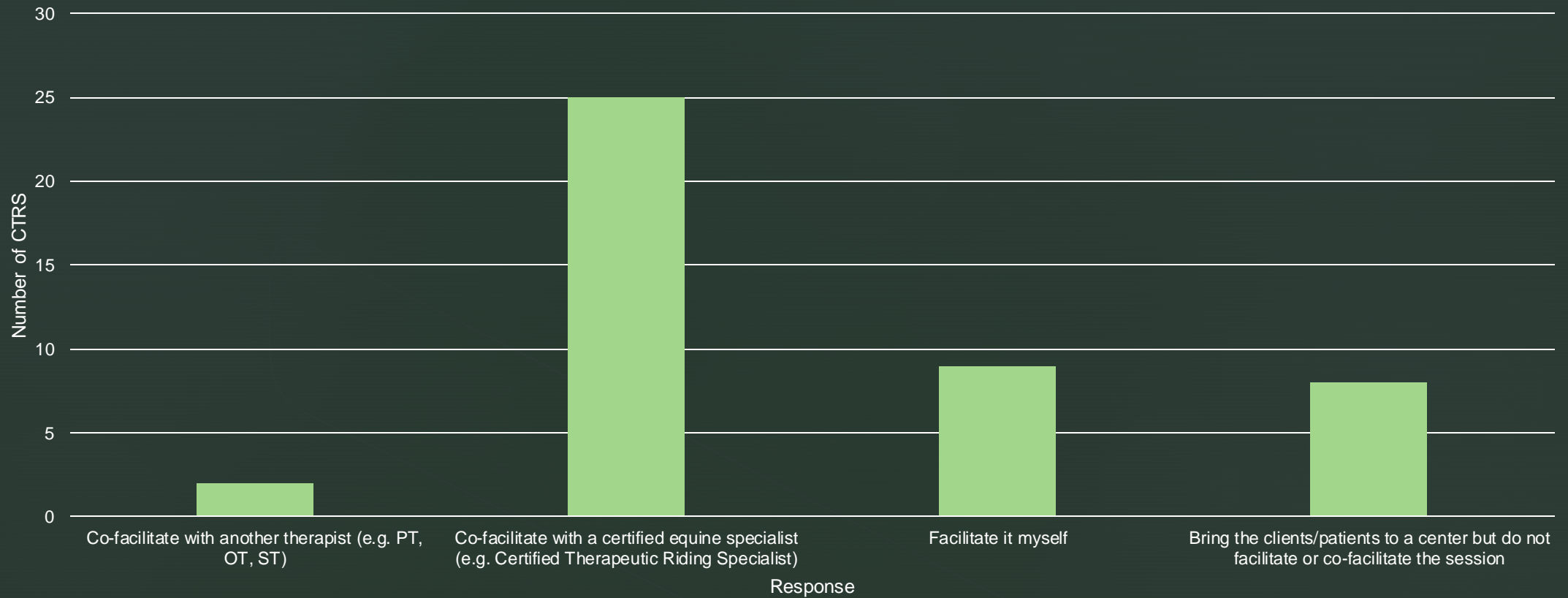
## How long are your typical sessions when you facilitate by incorporating equines into mounted work?



4.55% 15 minutes, 13.64% 30 minutes, **43% 1 hour**, 4.55% 1 hr15 min, 2.27% 1hr 30min, 11.36% 2 hrs



## How do you implement the mounted session?



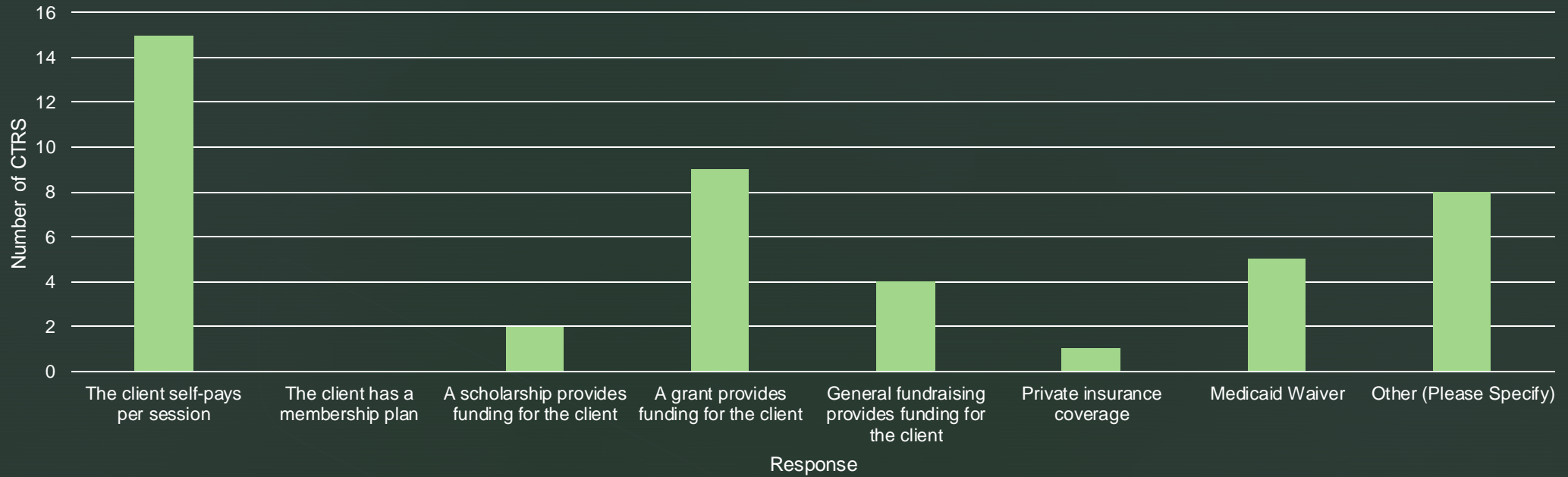
Co-facilitate 4.55%

Co-facilitate with equine specialist 56.82%

Myself 20.45%,

Bring clients to center 18.88%

What is the most frequent way that a mounted session is funded? (Check only one)



**Most frequent way a mounted session is funded:**

**Self-pay 34.09%, Scholarship 4.55%, Grant 20.45%, Fundraising 9.09%, Private Ins. 2.27%, Waiver 11.36%**

**When asked to check all ways that mounted session is funded:**

**Self-pay 24.73% Membership 1.08% Scholarship 17.20% Grant 23.66% Fundraising 11.83%  
Private Ins. 4.3% Waiver 8.6% Other 8.6%**



# CTRS Mounted Work Summary

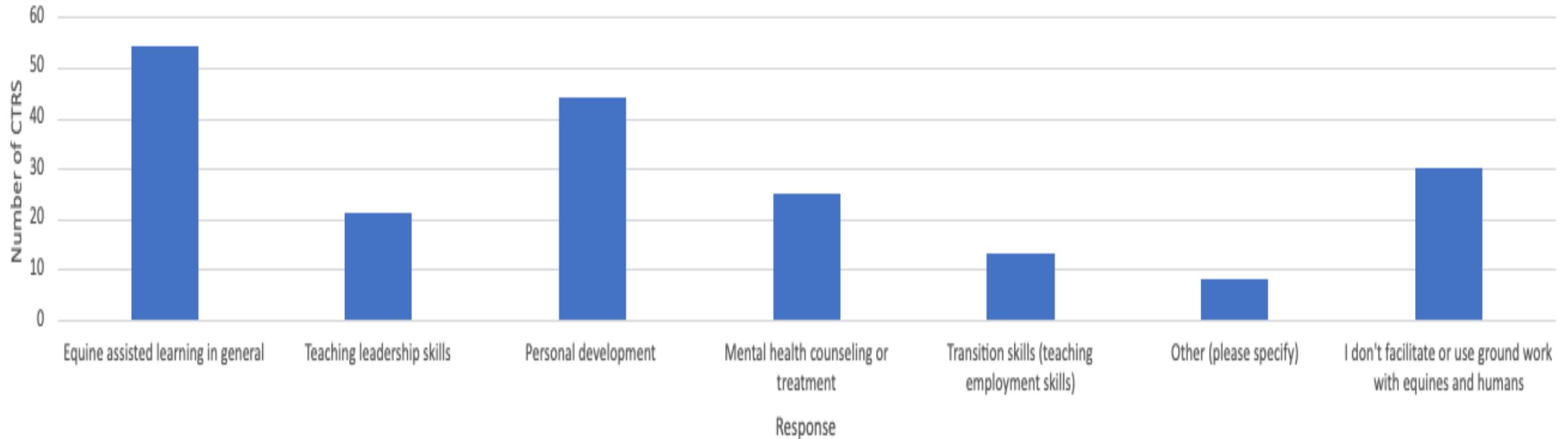
- 19% facilitate 1:1 RT while >30% report therapeutic/adaptive riding
- 48% primary focus on physical domain while 28% focus on emotional domain
- Populations with neurological dx highest at 26%, while sensory dx lowest at 13%
- Populations with mental health, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities (~20%)
- Most typical sessions are weekly for 1 hour
- More than 50% of CTRS co-facilitate with an equine specialist
- 70% of clients were aged 18-75 years old
- Funding is most likely to be self-pay (34.09%)



# Groundwork

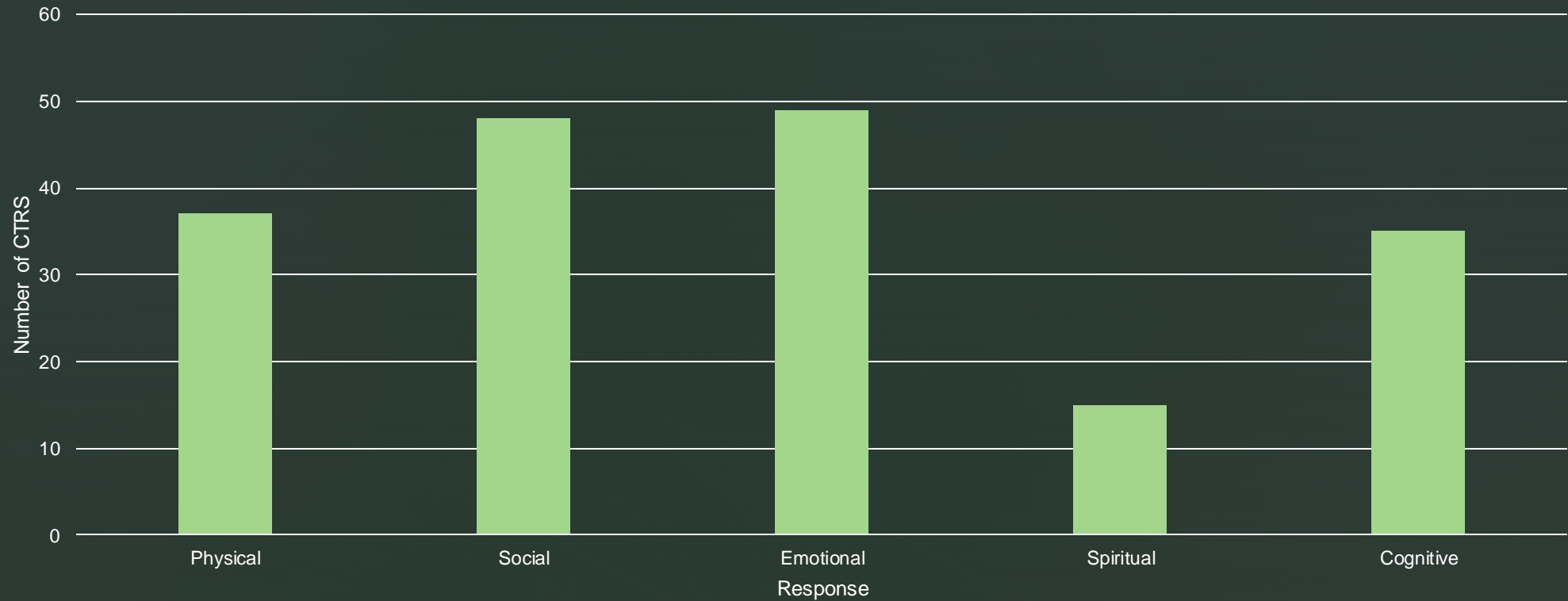
# CTRS Reported Types of Groundwork

If you facilitate groundwork (humans standing on the ground to interact with horse), in what way do you use the groundwork in recreational therapy practice? (Choose all that apply)



EAL 27.69% Leadership 10.77% Personal Development 22.56% Mental Health 12.82% Transition Skills 6.67% Other 4.10%

What recreational therapy goal domains are the focus of your groundwork with equines? (Choose as many as apply)

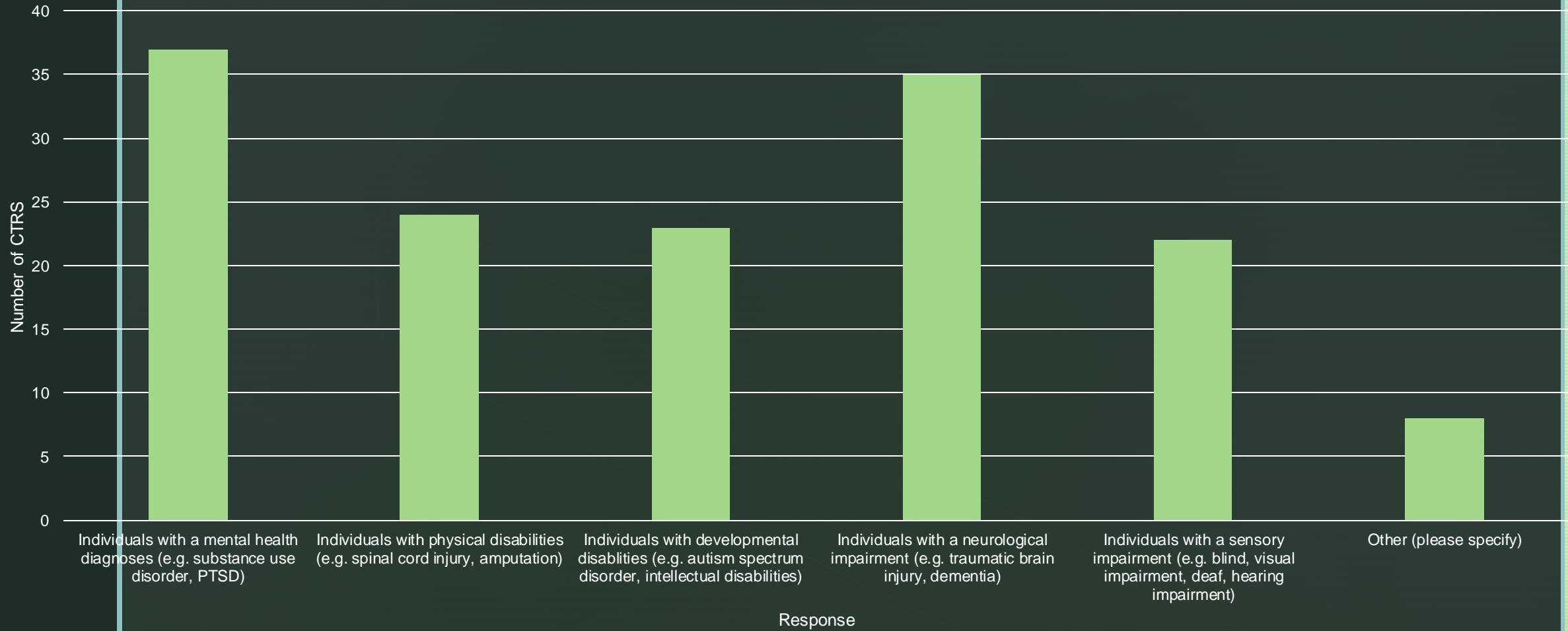


**Physical 20.11%**   **Social 26.9%**   **Emotional 26.63%**   **Spiritual 8.15%**   **Cognitive 19.02%**

What is the PRIMARY RT goal domains are the focus of your groundwork with equines?

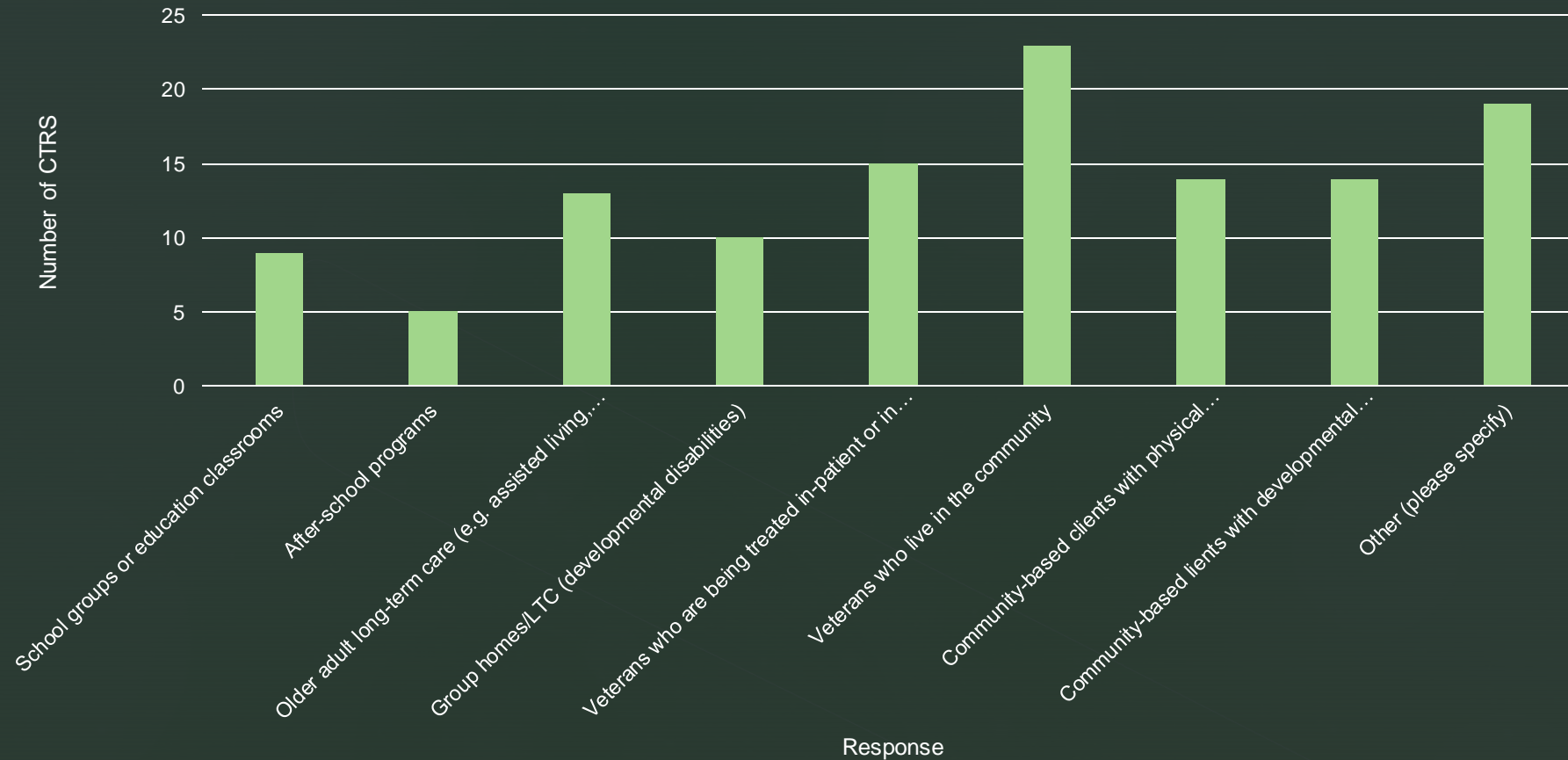
Physical 5.4%   Social 12.73%   **Emotional 58.18%**   Spiritual 1.82%   Cognitive 21.82%

# What population(s) do you incorporate equine groundwork with? (Choose as many as apply)



**Mental Health 24.83%, Physical Disabilities 16.11%, Dev. Disabilities 15.44%, Neurological Impairment 23.49% ,Sensory 14.77%**

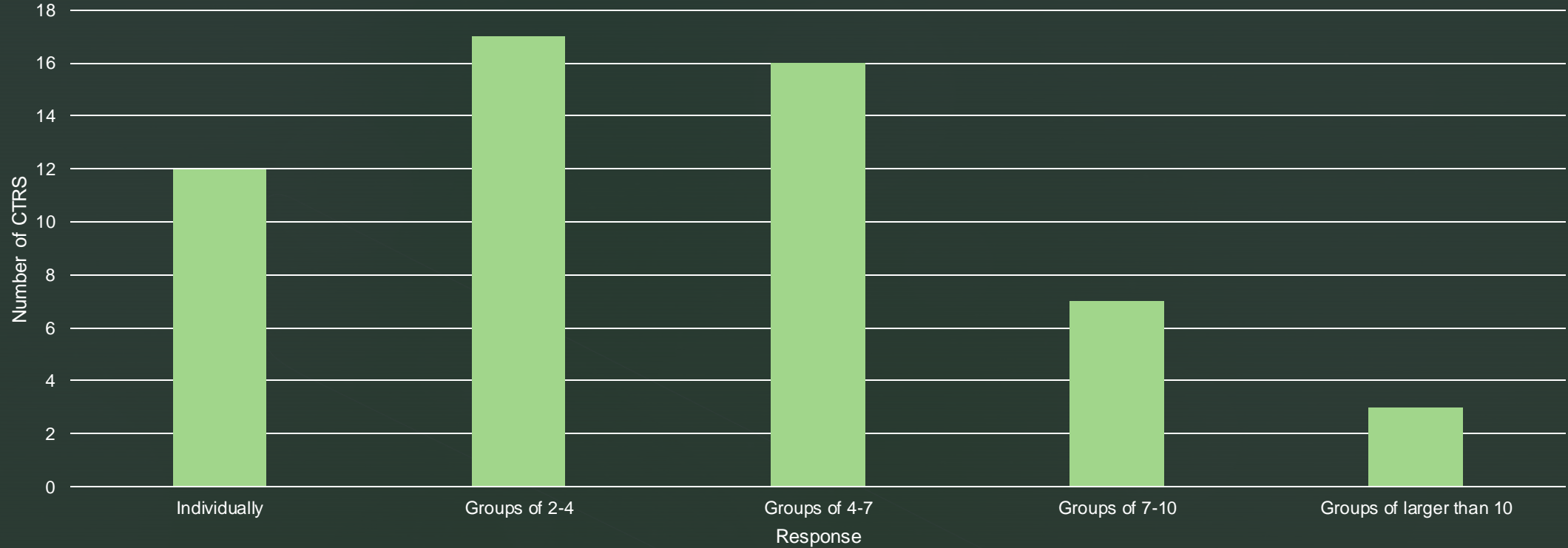
What population groups do you serve when you incorporate equines into groundwork?  
(Choose as many as apply)



School groups 7.38%, After-school programs 4.10%, Older Adult LTC 10.66%, Group Homes 8.20%, Veterans (in-patient) 12.30%, Veterans (community) 18.85%, Physical Disabilities 11.49%, Dev. Disabilities 11.48%

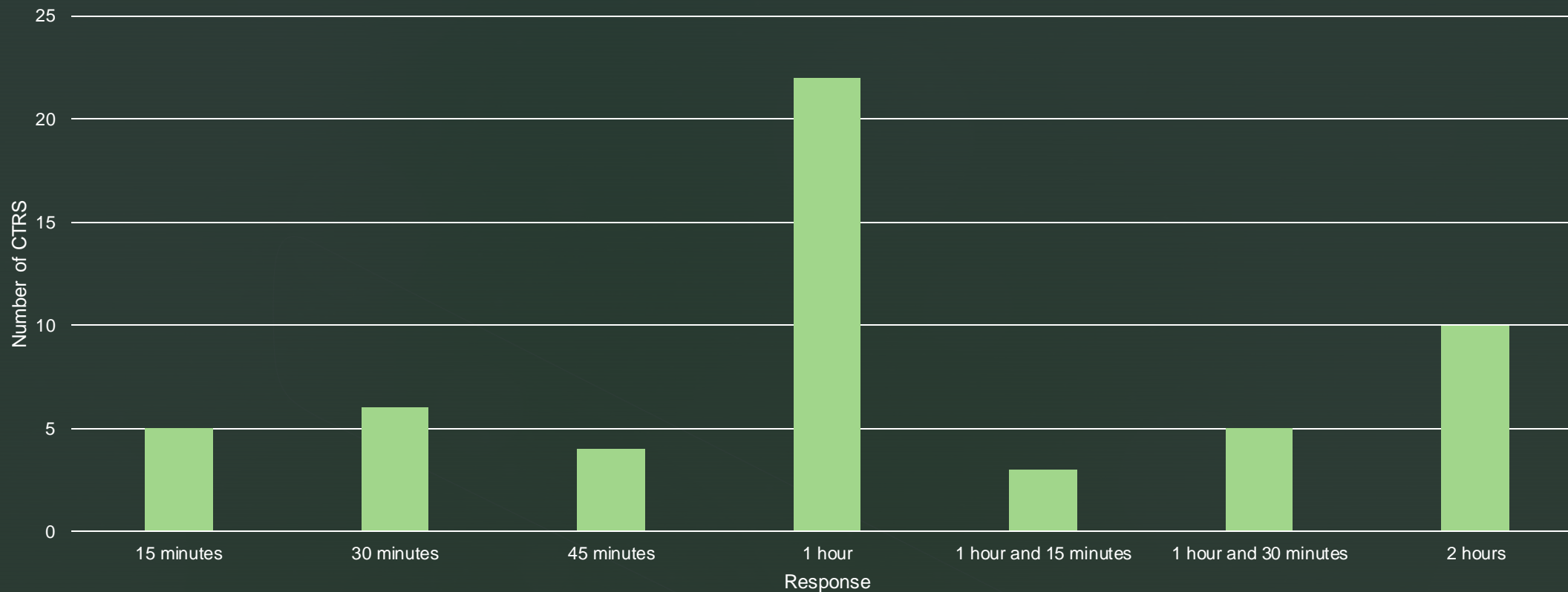


How many clients do you usually have at one time when you facilitate by incorporating equines into groundwork?



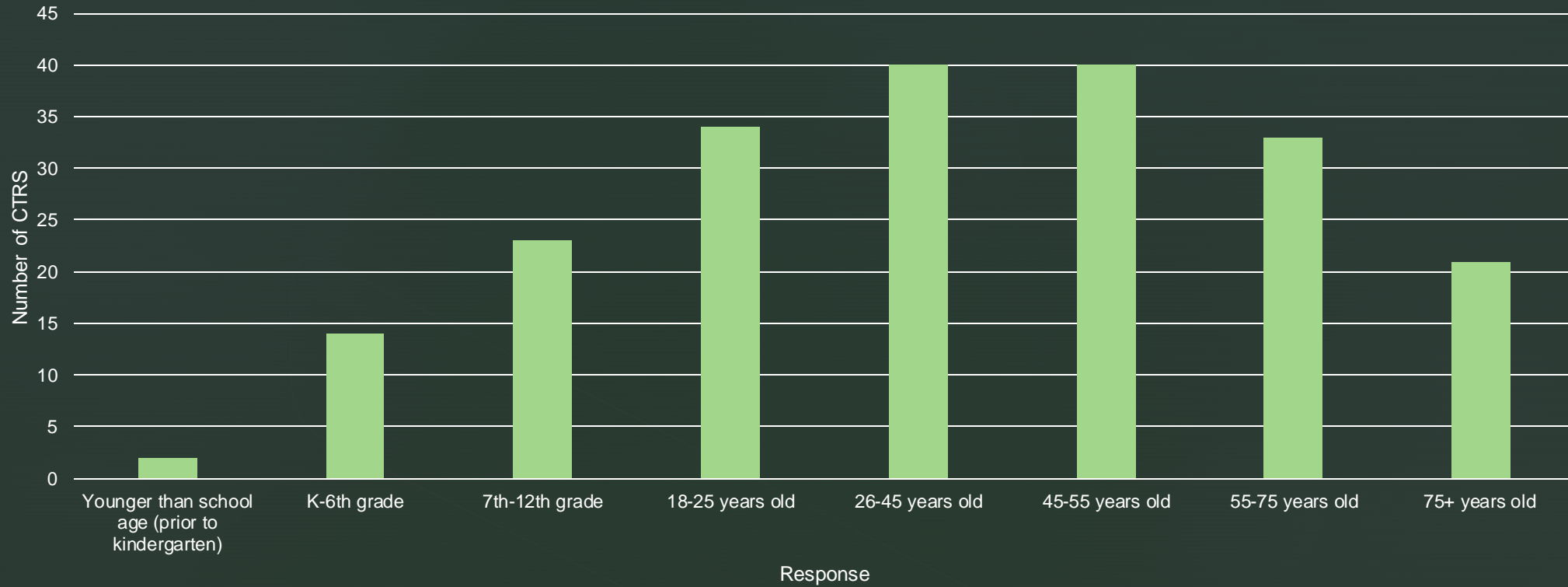
Individually 21.82%, Groups of 2-4 30.91%, Groups of 4-7 29.09%, Groups of 7-10 12.73%, Groups larger than 10 5.45%

## How long are your typical sessions when you facilitate by incorporating equines into groundwork?



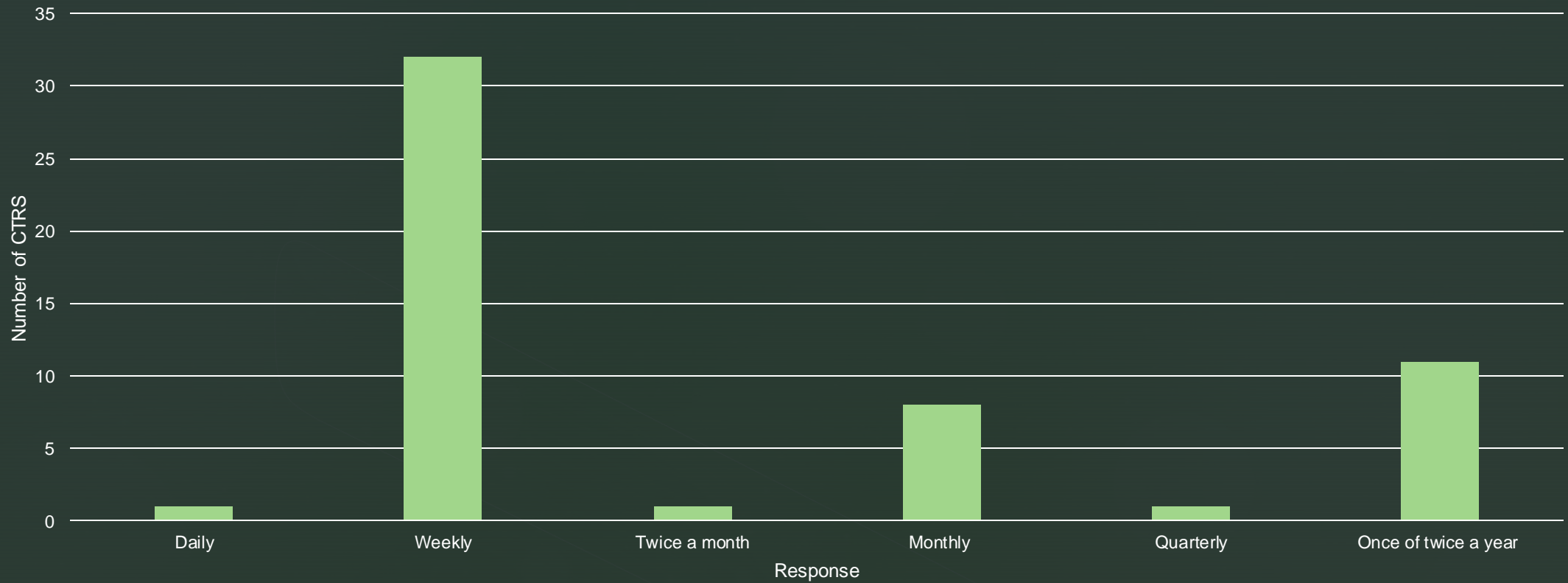
15 min 9.09%, 30 min 10.91%, 45 min 7.27%, **1 hour 40%**, 1.15 hr 5.45%, 1.30 hr 9.09%, 2 hrs 18.18%

### What age are the individuals with whom you use groundwork? (Choose as many as apply)



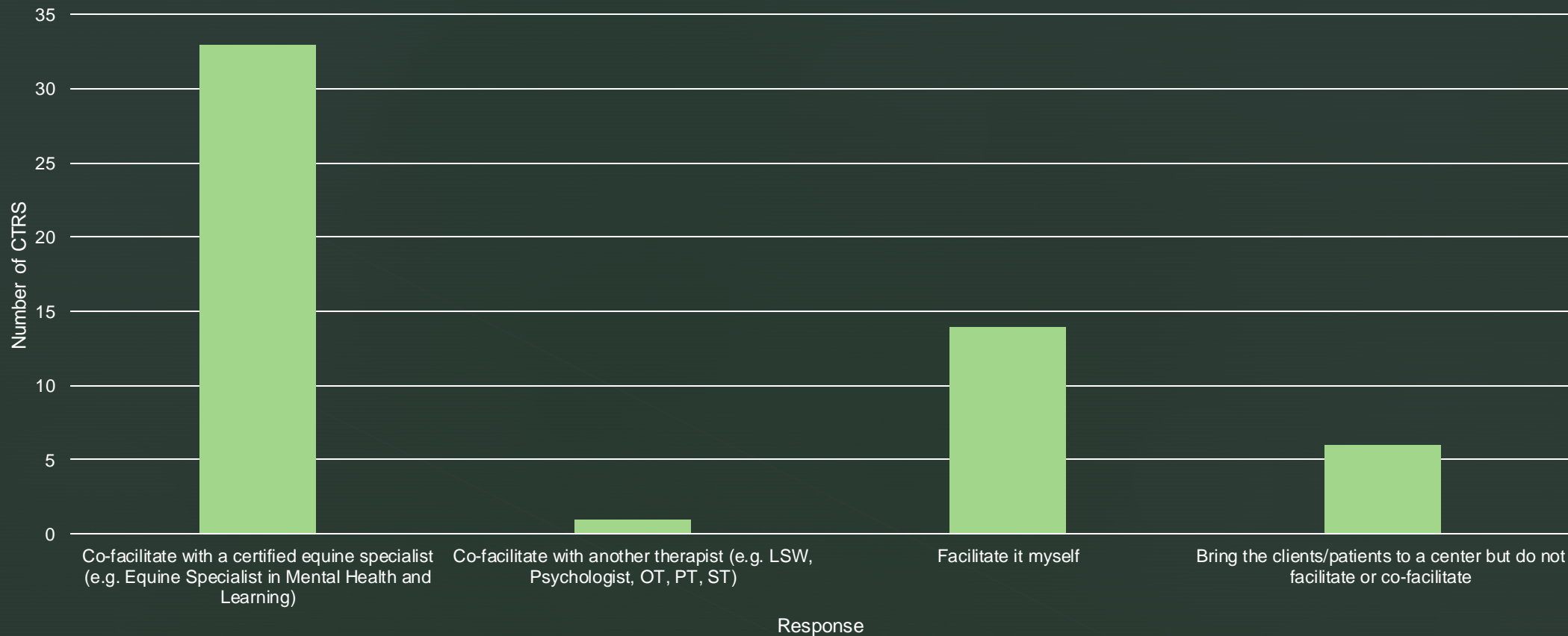
Pre-K < 1%, K-6th grade 6.76%, 7th-12th grade 11.11%, 18-25 yrs 16.43%, 26-45 yrs 19.32%, 45-55 yrs 19.32%, 56-75 yrs 15.94%, 75+ yrs 10.14%

In general how often do you typically facilitate by incorporating equines into groundwork per client?



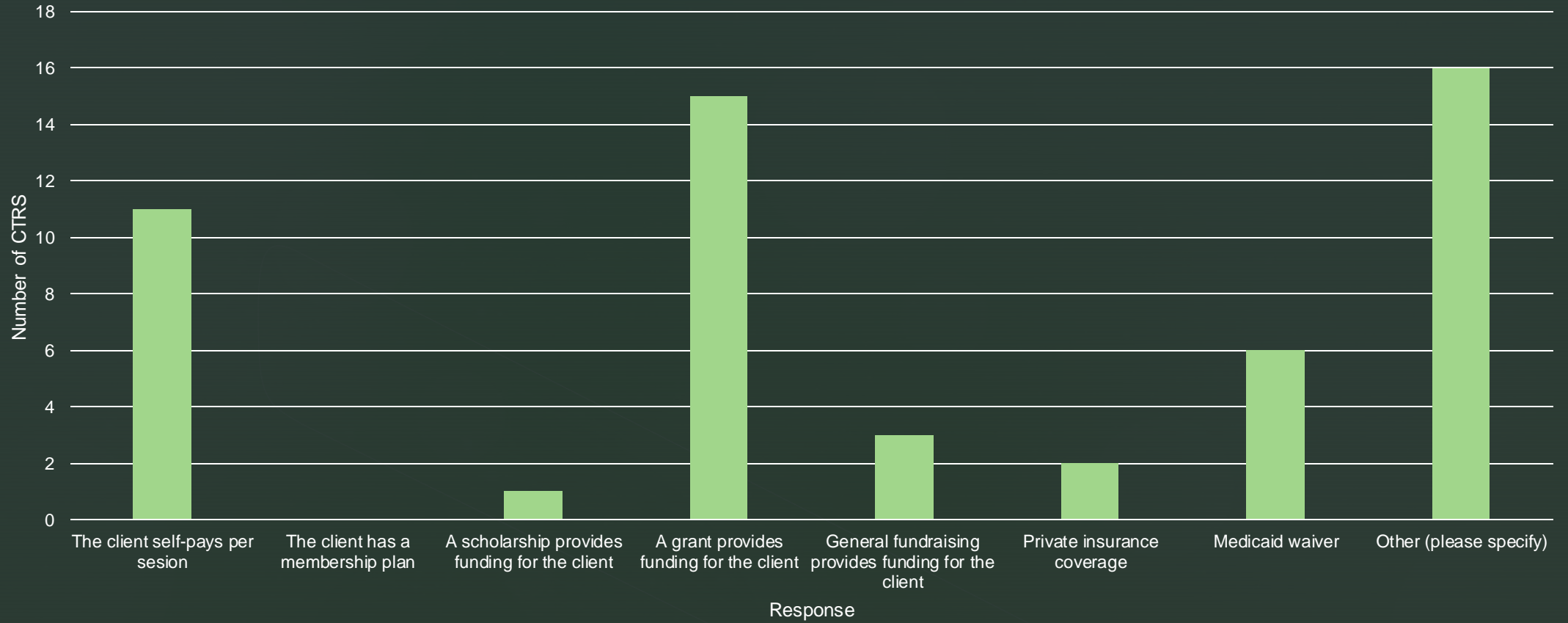
Daily 1.85%, Weekly 59.26%, Twice a month 1.85%, Monthly 14.81%, Quarterly 1.85%, Once a year 20.37%

### How do you implement the ground work sessions?



Co-facilitate with equine specialist 61.11%, Co-facilitate with another therapist 1.85%, Facilitate it myself 25.93%, Bring to center 11.11%

### How is the groundwork session funded? (Choose all that apply)



Self-pay 20.37%, Membership plan 0%, Scholarship 9.26%, Fundraising 18.52%, Private Ins. 5.56%, Waiver 11.11%, Other 35.19%

# Groundwork Summary

27% EAL, 22% Personal Development

Primary goal area, 58% Emotional

Populations: Mental Health 24.83%, Neurological 23.9%

Groups 2-4 or Groups 4-7 add up to 60%

1 hour weekly sessions

About 20% self-pay and 18% Fundraising

61% are co-facilitating with equine specialist



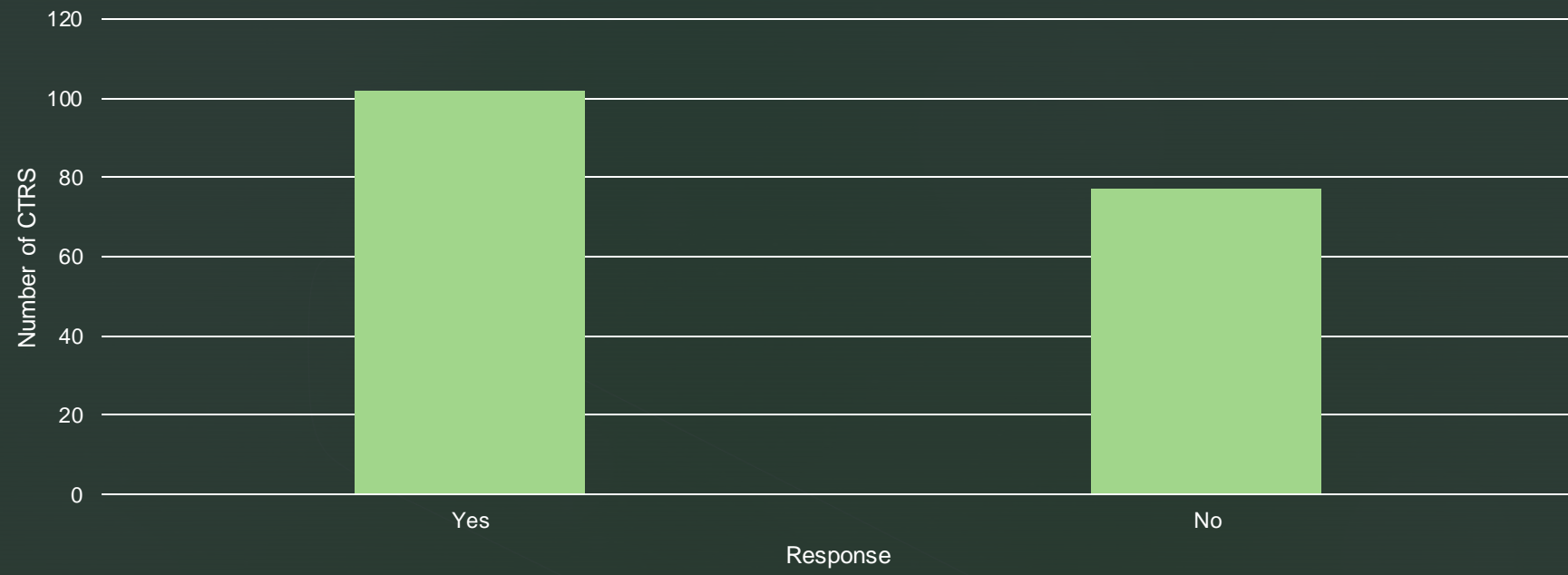


# CTRS Professional Development



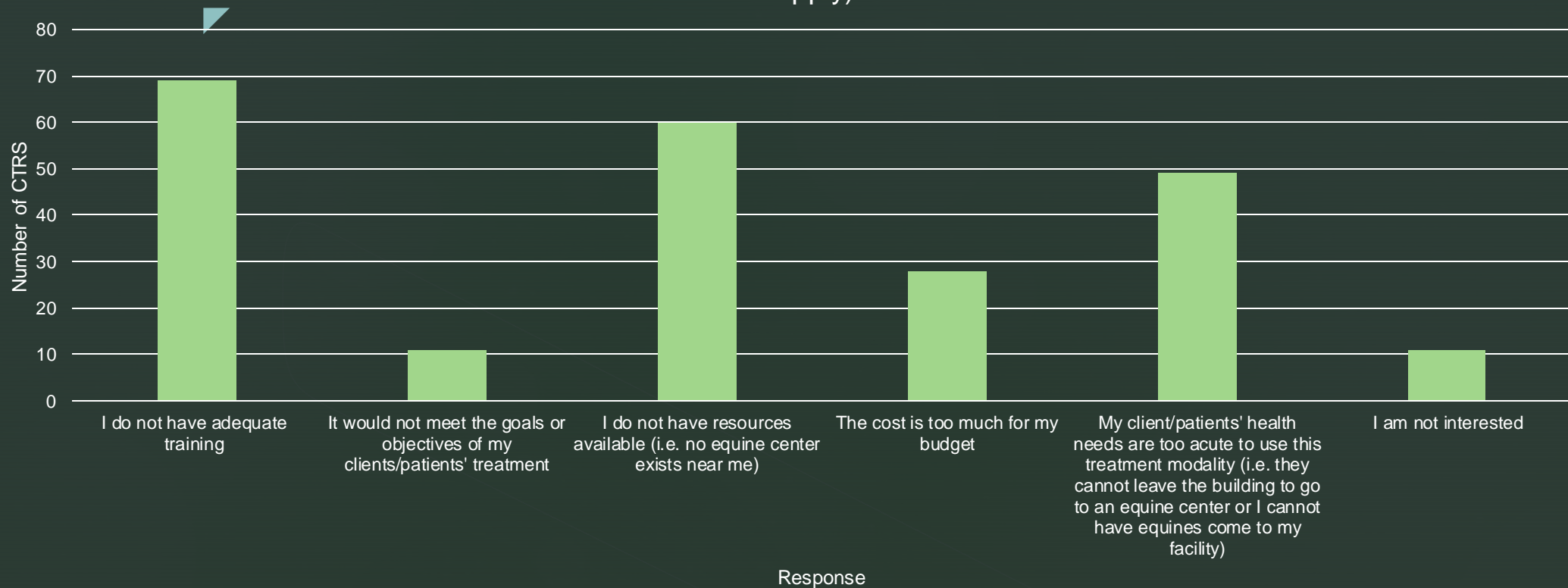


Are you interested in further training or education about incorporating equines with your clients/patients?



Yes 56.67% No 43.33%

What are the reasons that you have chosen not to incorporate equines in your practice? (Select all that apply)



Lack of training 29.91%, Doesn't fit tx. goals 4.7%, lack resources 26.5%, cost 11.97%, pt. health care needs 21.79%, no interest 5.13%

# Professional Development Highlights


- 56% of participants are interested in professional development opportunities
- Almost 30% report lack of training as reason that they don't incorporate equines
- About 38% report that resources (center near them) and cost are an issue

# Discussion

- CTRS doing mounted work more focused on physical goals and those doing ground work more focused on emotional goals
  - Most sessions are weekly for 1 hour
  - More than 50% co-facilitate with equine specialist
  - Very few co-treating with PT, OT, SLP, Psychology
  - More than 70% work with adults (18-75 yrs)
  - More than 70% work with groups 2-4 or 4-7



# Phase 2: Guidelines

- Part 1= Empowered to partner with Community Facility
    - Finding a good facility and setting up MOU
    - Visit, orientation
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Safety and Ethical behavior
  - Part 2 = Therapy- EAS and the APIE process
    - Assessment (Screening and Assessment)
    - Planning (goals, objectives, relate to community-based improvements)
    - Implementation (mounted, groundwork, facilitation techniques)
    - Evaluation (of goals, objectives, and overall outcomes)
- 

## References

McKissock, B., Kemeny, B., Hooker, T., & Gramlich, C. (2022). *The Role of Recreational Therapy in Equine Assisted Services*. American Therapeutic Recreation Association. [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.atra-online.com/resource/resmgr/reports/Recreation\\_Therapy\\_and\\_Equin.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.atra-online.com/resource/resmgr/reports/Recreation_Therapy_and_Equin.pdf)

McKissock, B., Kemeny, B., Hooker, T., & Gramlich, C. (2023, in press). The role of recreational therapy in equine assisted services. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*.

Wood, W., Alm, K., Benjamin, J., Thomas, L., Anderson, D., Pohl, L., & Kane, M. (2021). Optimal terminology for services in the U.S. that incorporate horses to benefit people: A consensus document. *Journal of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine*, 27(1), 88-95. DOI: [10.1089/acm.2020.0415](https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2020.0415)