



**Creating a Good Life for
Horses presented by MARS
Equestrian™**



Dr. Camie Heleski

Saturday, January 13, 2024

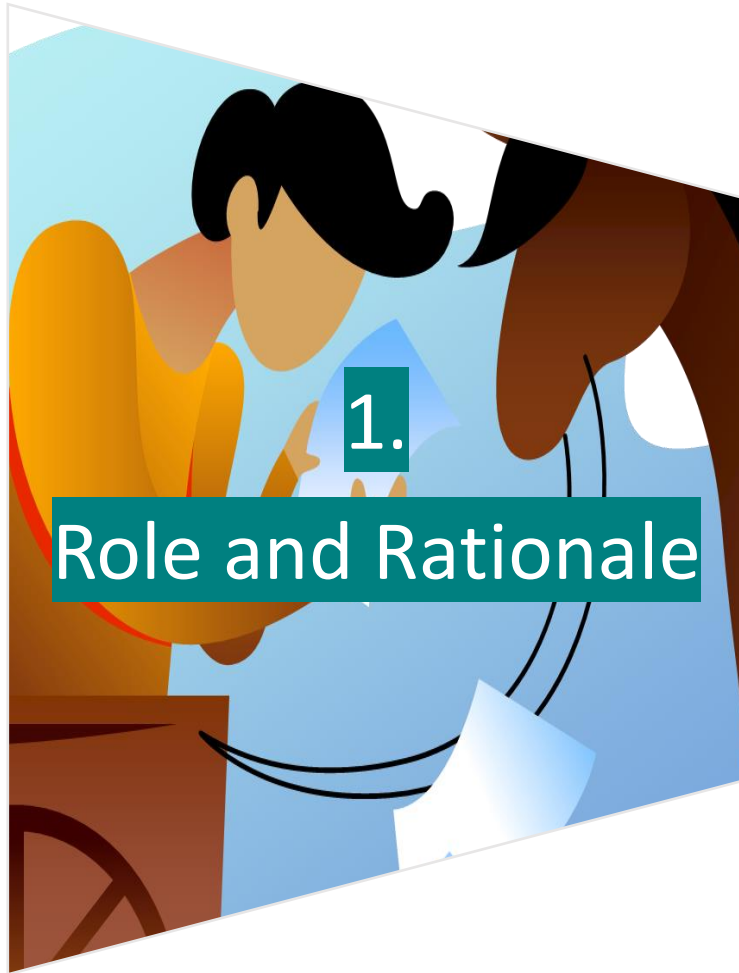


Interim Report to the FEI Sports Forum April 2023

Professor Nat Waran
(As Chair of the EEWB)



Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission - Interim Report





Why did the FEI establish an Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

To ensure the future involvement of horses in sport.

‘Equestrian sport and the FEI’s activities are more than ever under public scrutiny and through the Commission we want to embrace that scrutiny to drive change and shine the spotlight on our number one stakeholder – the horse’

(Ingmar De Vos President FEI).





Who are we ? - 'Critical Friends'

External



Nat Waran (Chair)



Kathalijne Visser



Camie Heleski

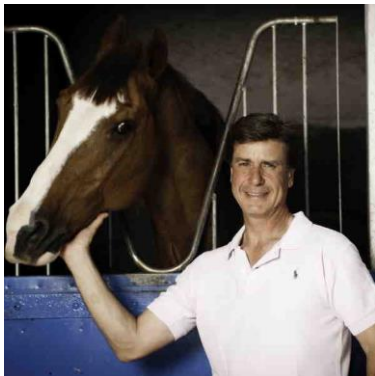


Jessica Stark



Madeleine Campbell

Internal



Cayetano Martíne de Irujo



Ken Lalo



Theo Ploegmakers



Cesar Hirsch



Sabrina Ibáñez

The Commission's role in relation to the FEI

To provide independent objective advice regarding equine ethics and wellbeing to the FEI Board.



Develop a strategic approach to help guide decision-making within the FEI in relation to Equine Ethics and Wellbeing.



Provide recommendations to address issues of SLO to the FEI Board for their consideration.



The FEI receives recommendations and advice from the Commission, and decides on the course of action (if any) to address the recommendations.



Response





There are different lenses

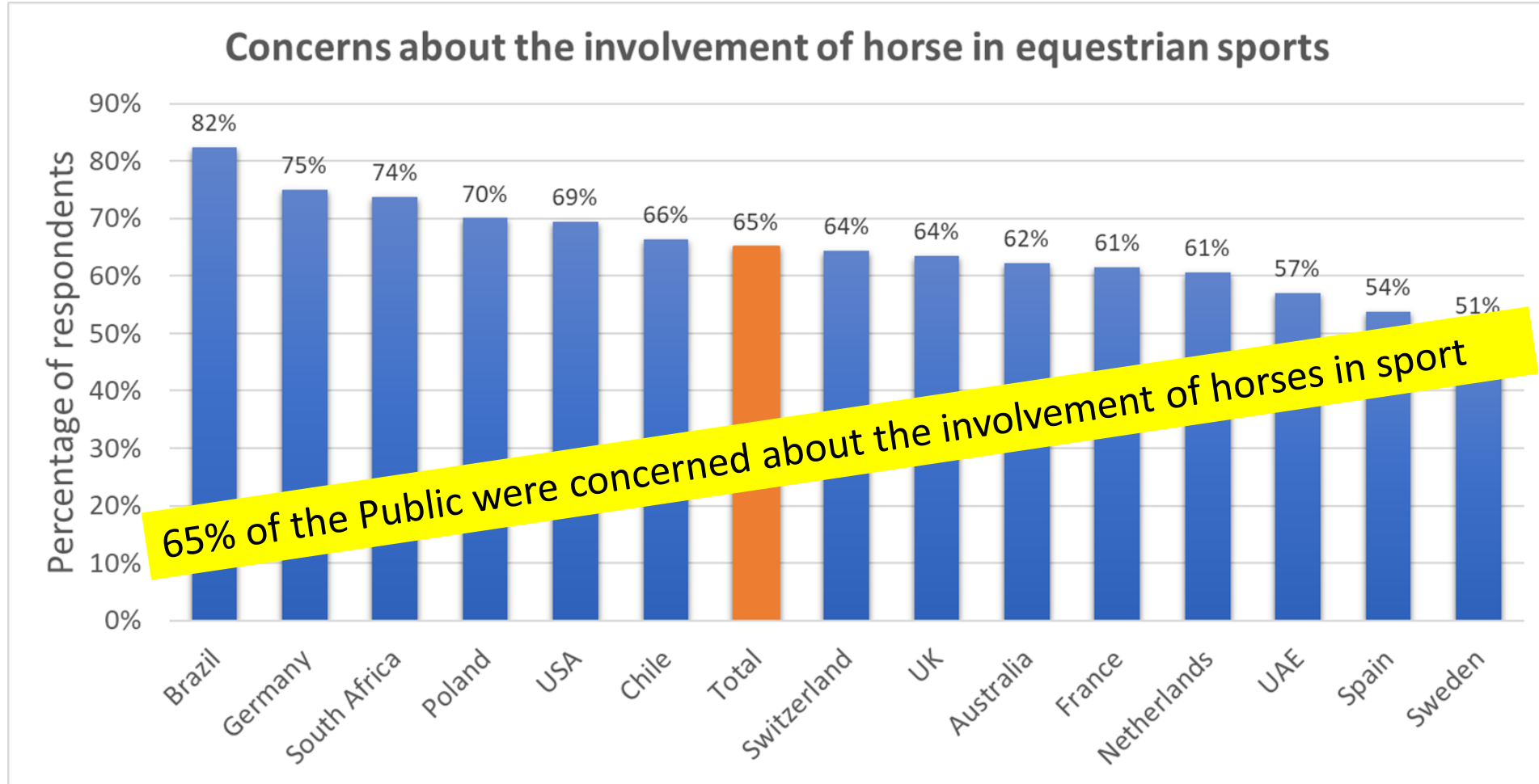




Non-Equestrian (Public)

- Members of the Public with no investment or history with horses

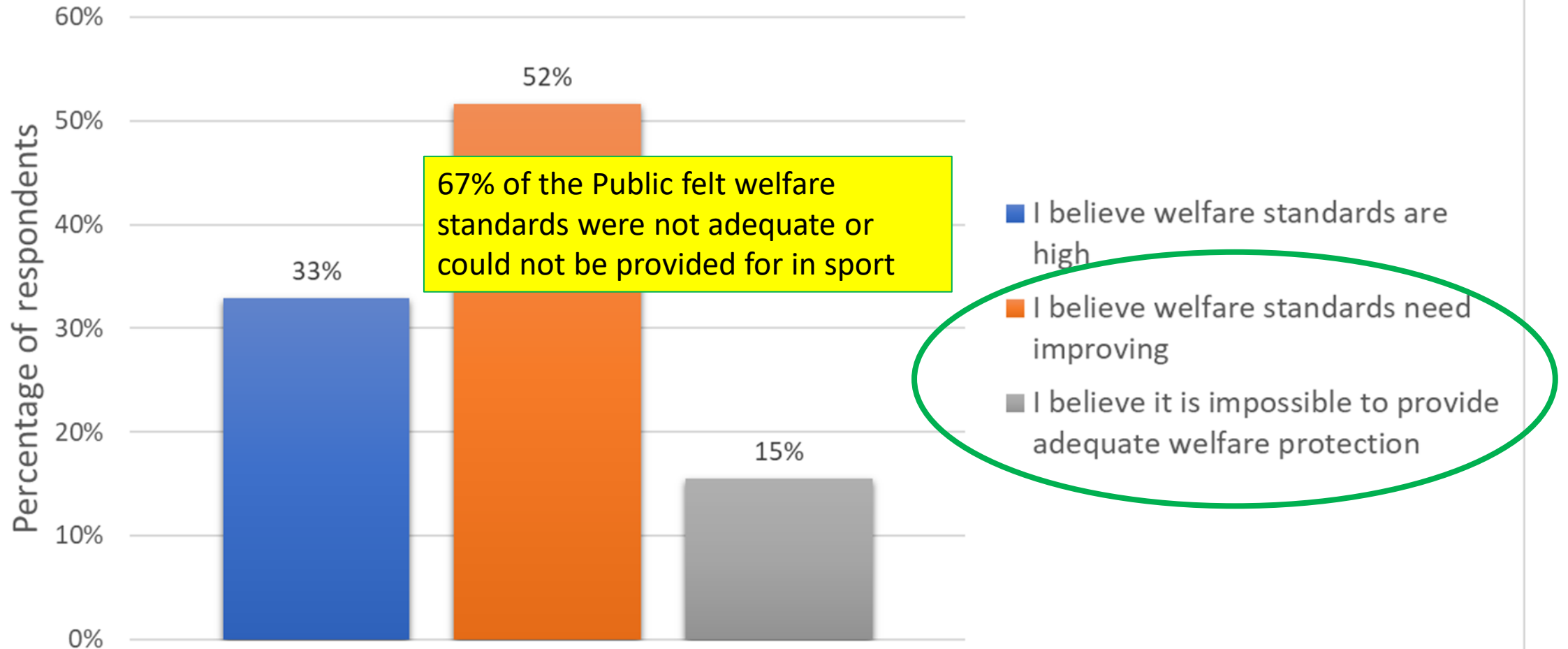
The Public are concerned





This is the public perception

Which of the following statements regarding the welfare of horses involved in sports do you most agree with?





Results

There are 6 priority focus areas for SLO





Recommendations



Basis for Commission Recommendations

- ✓ **Public and Equestrian Survey Results**
- ✓ **External related information** – External reports, information from animal welfare organisations, independent survey results
- ✓ **Research evidence** - Reviewing research publications related to equine wellbeing and ethics. Identifying gaps in knowledge, making recommendations for where research is needed.
- ✓ **Consultation with Equine welfare experts** – consultation regarding specific concerns and potential solutions with different groups involved with equine welfare and use of horse in sport
- ✓ **EEWB Advisory/Working Groups** –Scientific Advisory Grp, Education Working Grp, Legal Working Grp, Communication Working Grp.



6 Early Recommendations to the FEI

Horsemanship Courses
Available to FEI Officials at all times, recommended to them frequently



FEI

Tack and Equipment – 3 *recommendations*

- **Double bridles** should not be mandatory in any equestrian discipline
- **Spurs** should not be mandatory in any equestrian discipline
- **Nosebands** should not be tight in any equestrian discipline – A uniform method of measurement including an agreed definition of ‘too tight’, should be used based on the available science.

Regulation – 1 *recommendation*

- Include in the FEI General Regulations a rule to apply consistently to all Disciplines to allow elimination during the field of play on horse welfare grounds

Others – 2 *recommendations*

- Establish an Education Focus Group to review existing modules in FEI Campus and propose new ones
- Establish a Research Fund to address gaps in current knowledge regarding Equine Welfare

24 Further Recommendations (*draft*)

Grouped into Five Key Areas

The FEI will:

01

Be a Leader

02

Be Trusted

03

Be Transparent

04

Be ProActive

05

Be Accountable

1. The FEI will be a Leader



Objective: To ensure that the FEI plays a critical role in advancing equine welfare globally by setting an example that others aspire towards.

5 Recommendations:

1. Develop a future focussed 'Good Life for Horses' Vision and Strategy
2. Commit to ensuring a Good Life for Horses in Sport
3. Develop an equine centric approach to management of FEI events
4. Promote ethical, evidence based equestrianism
5. Place horse interests before those of a human or the sport



Recommendation 1: Develop a FEI Good Life For Horses Vision and Strategy

1. Promote the concept of a 'Good Life for Horses'

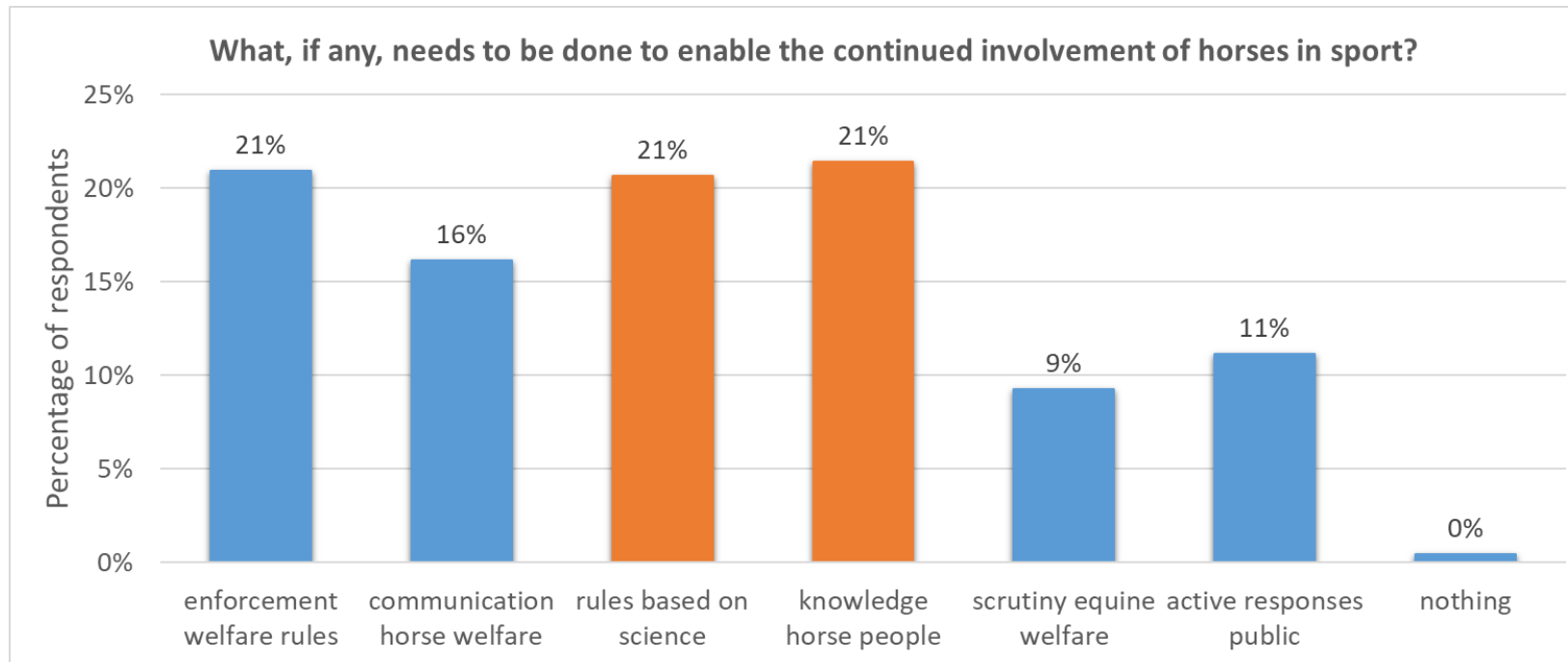
- Ensure a Good Life for all horses is the fundamental tenet of the FEI Equine Welfare Strategy
- and
- Horses engaged in recreational and sporting activities should be provided with care, management, training and performance conditions to ensure positive physical, mental, behavioural and social outcomes.

2. Maintain and Strengthen Social Licence to Operate

- Explicit in the FEI Equine Welfare strategy is an appreciation of the need to maintain and enhance the reputation of the FEI and the equine sports industry
- and
- To demonstrate commitment to addressing equine ethics and wellbeing concerns to ensure an ongoing social licence for the involvement of horses in sport

Recommendation 4

Promote only ethical and evidence-based equestrianism. Ensure ongoing development of an understanding of the importance of utilising ethical, evidence-based practices in horse training, management and performance.

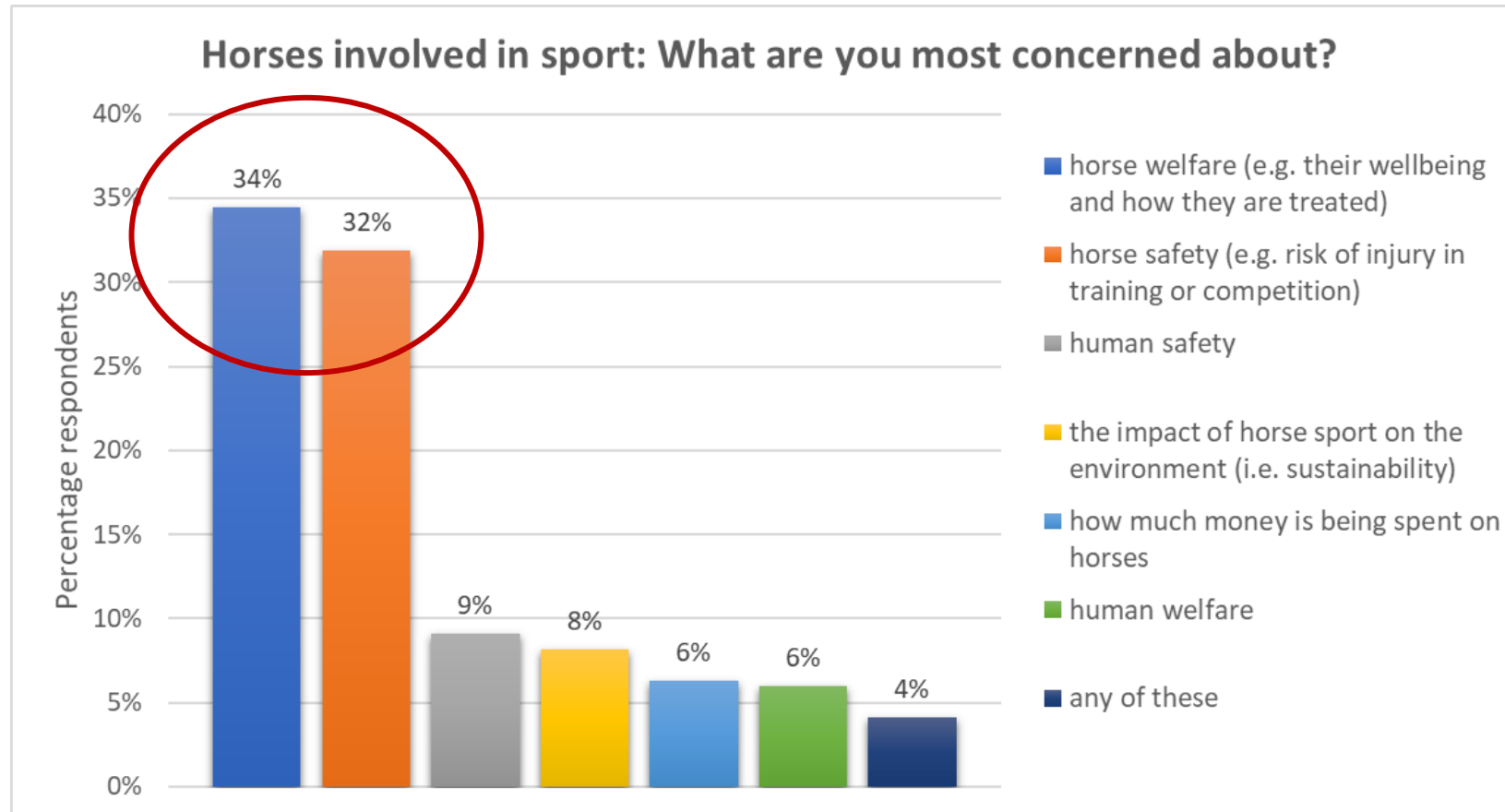


The use of evidence based knowledge is required by the equestrian community:

- *Rules based on science (21%)*
- *Knowledge of horse people (21%)*

Recommendation 5

Ensure that the horse's interests are always placed before the interests of the human or sport, and celebrate equestrians who clearly place their horse's interests before their own.



*The **public** was very clear: they are concerned about the horse, not about human.*



2. The FEI will be Trusted



Objective: The FEI will embed equine welfare within its structure and ways of working to demonstrate its commitment to prioritising equine welfare in both policy and practice.

6 Recommendations:

1. Create an internal body/office as a *‘voice for the horse’*
2. Be sure equine welfare is prioritised in decision making and practice
3. Adopt a transparent and evidence-based approach for assessing welfare impacts of new and existing Tack and Equipment
4. Establish a process for checks *‘outside the competition’*
5. Ensure effective complaints process and whistle-blowing and empower equestrians as *‘active bystanders’*
6. Ensure there is an effective zero tolerance policy

Be Trusted – ‘A Voice for the Horse’

Recommendation 6

Create an internal office solely concerned with ‘equine wellbeing’ to ensure that the horse’s interests are prioritised in decision making and practice.

Provides clear
‘agency’ for the
horse

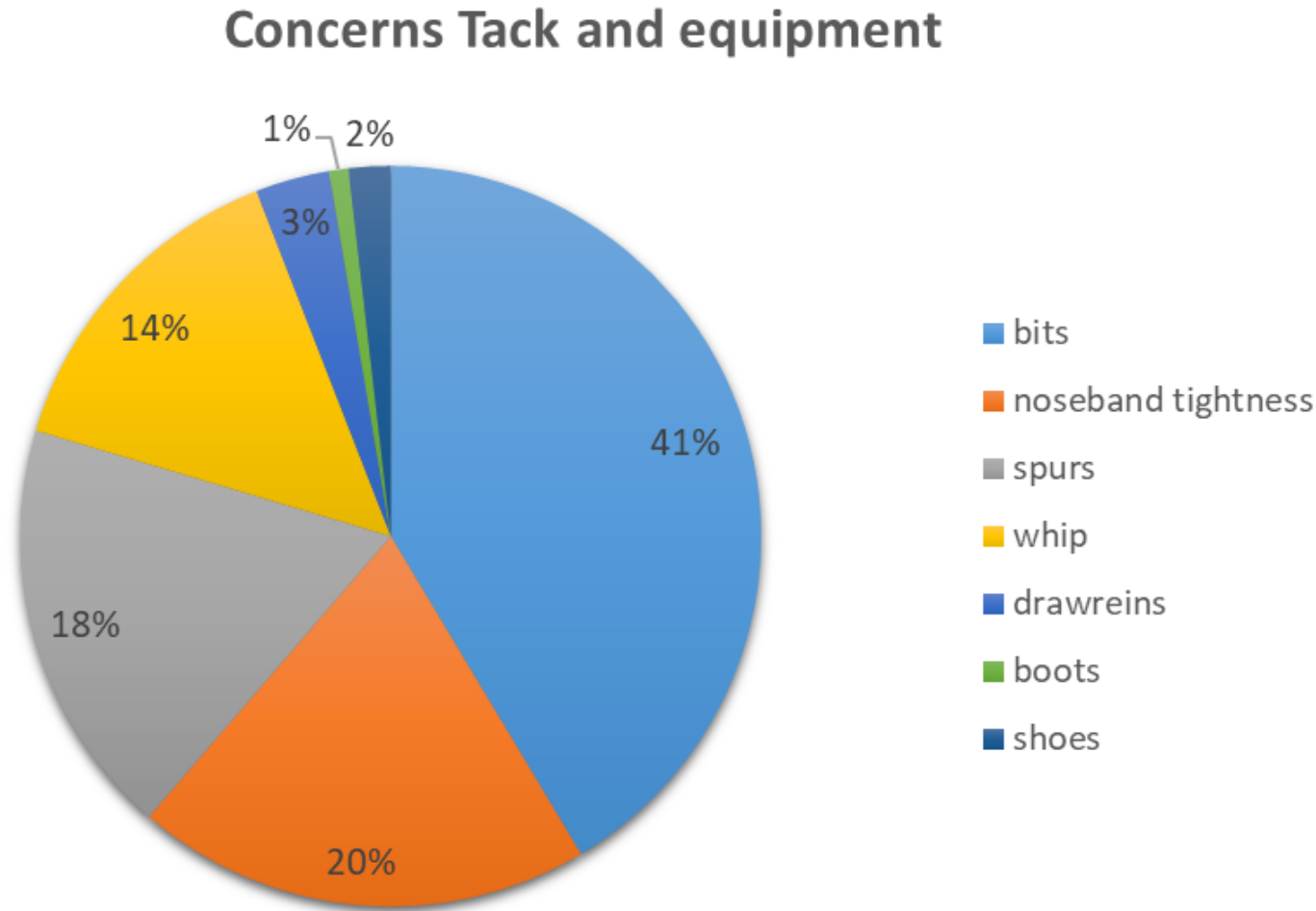
Ensures the
horse’s interests
can always be
considered
before any
others

Demonstrates
the FEI’s ongoing
commitment to
advancing
equine welfare
in sport

Ensures ongoing
development in
relation to new
evidence

Provides global
leadership
through direct
and indirect
influence

More specific concerns about Tack and Equipment

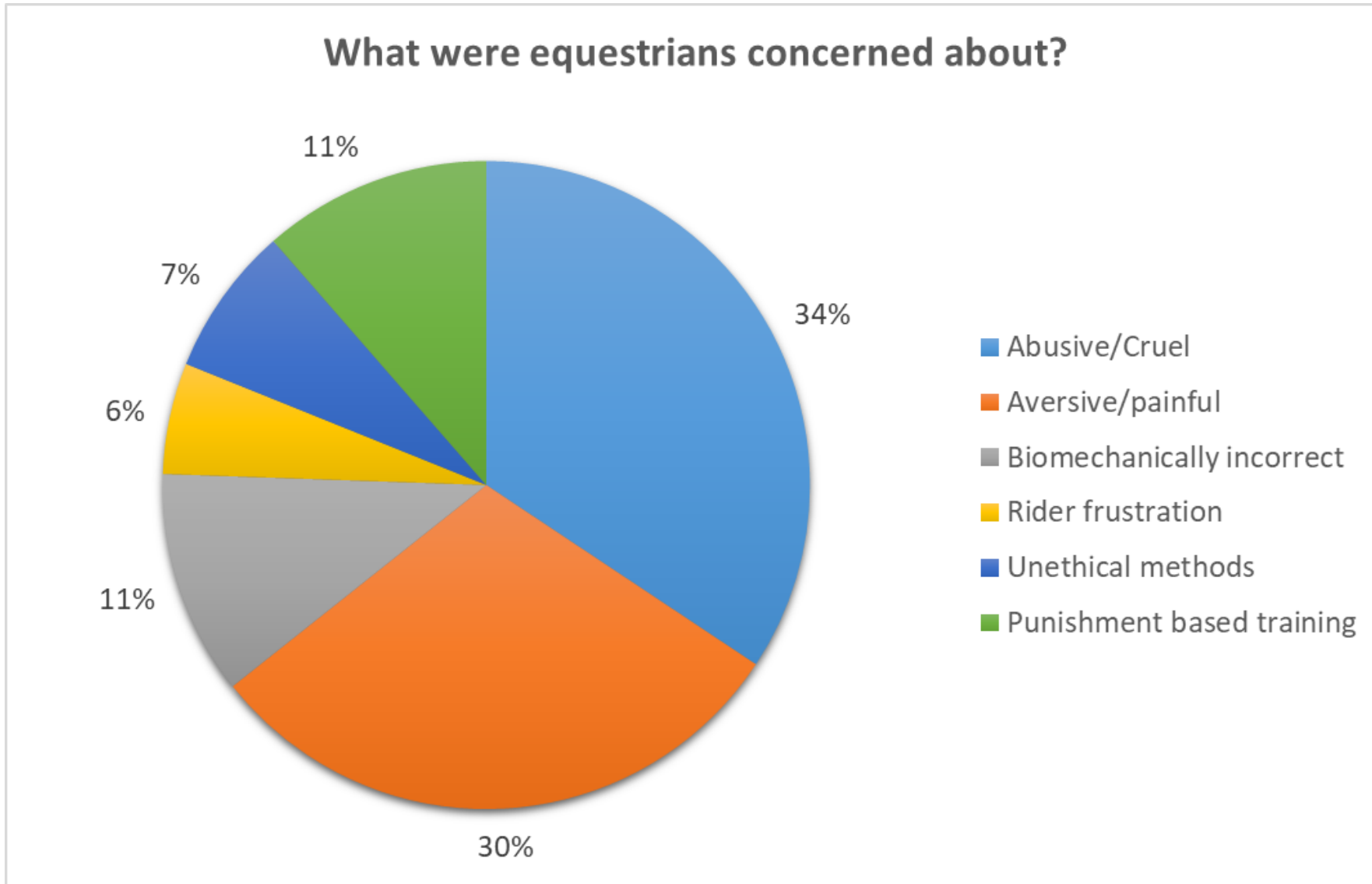


Recommendation 8 –
Adopt an evidence-based approach for regulating new and existing items of tack and equipment used in training and competition

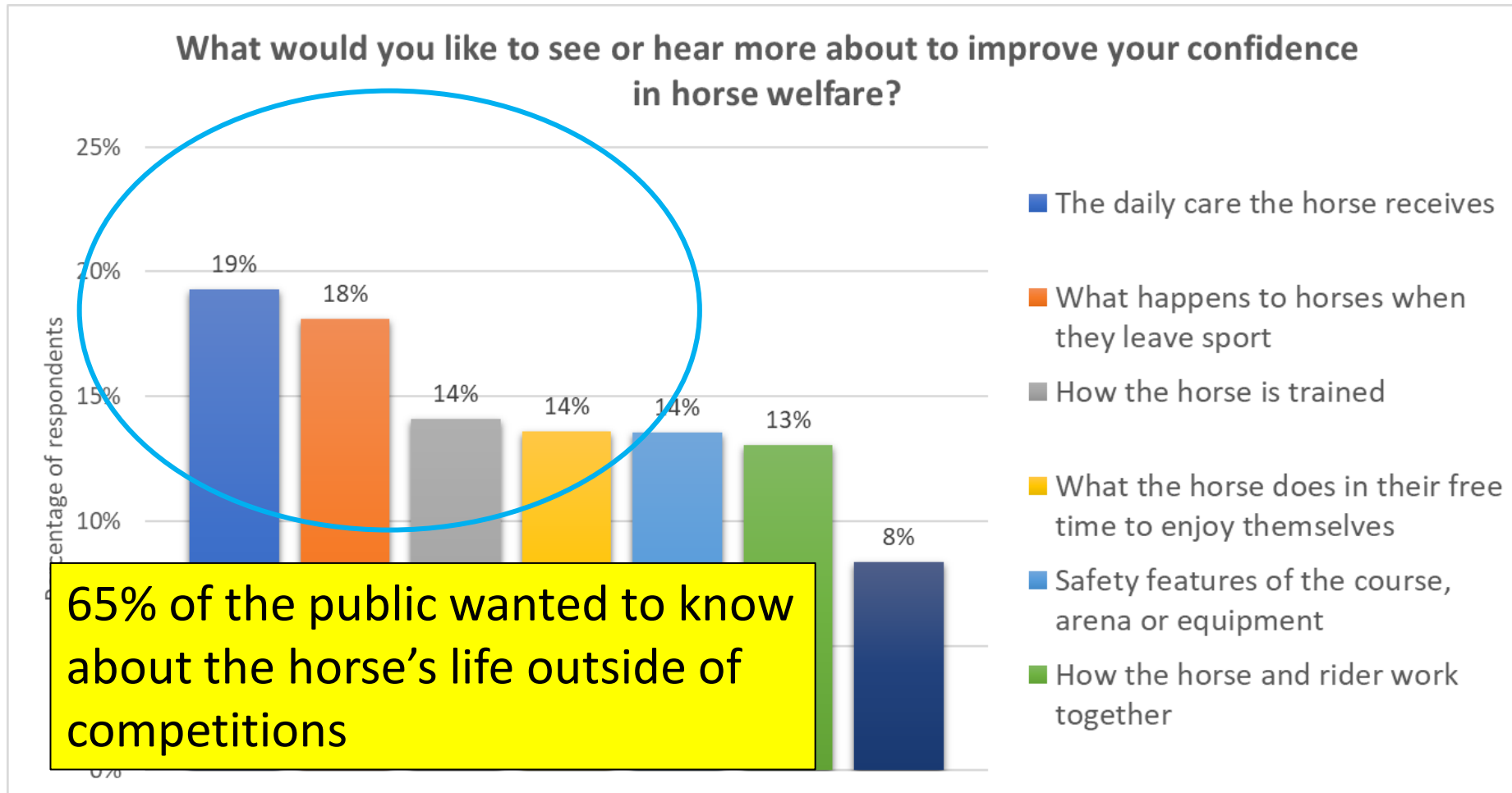
The area of most concern within Tack & Equipment was bits, followed by noseband, spurs and whip



More specific concerns about Training and Riding practices



Recommendation 9: Establish and implement a process for ensuring high standards of welfare and investigating risky practices for horses when **‘outside of competition’**



3. The FEI will be Transparent



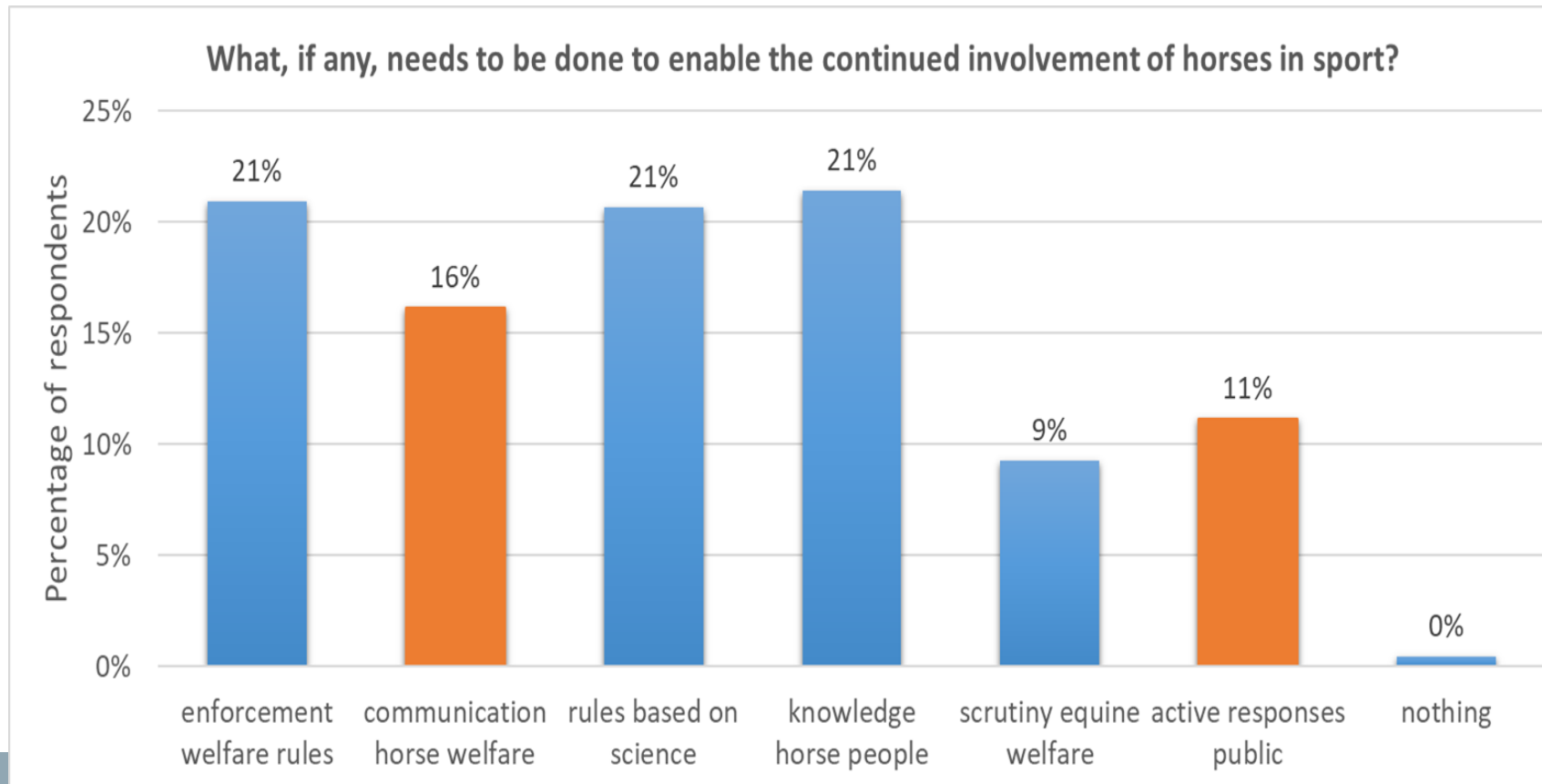
Objective: The FEI will validate its commitment to equine welfare by being proactive in how it communicates, engaging in dialogue and providing credible information.

5 Recommendations:

1. Proactively engage with the Public (including all equestrian stakeholders)
2. Use welfare–centric approach/language for describing equine-human interaction in sport
3. Develop Ethics and Wellbeing Position Statements for consistency and shared understanding of standards
4. Monitor SLO, measure progress and pro-actively address any concerns
5. Require collection and publication of lifecycle data for all competition horses

Recommendation 12.

Proactively and positively engage with the public (including equestrian stakeholders) in matters related to equine welfare.



This figure illustrates the importance of communication about horse welfare and active responses to the public to enable the continued involvement of horses in sport

What do the Public want to know about?

- *How horses are cared for/trained on a daily basis*
- *What happens to horses when they leave the sport*

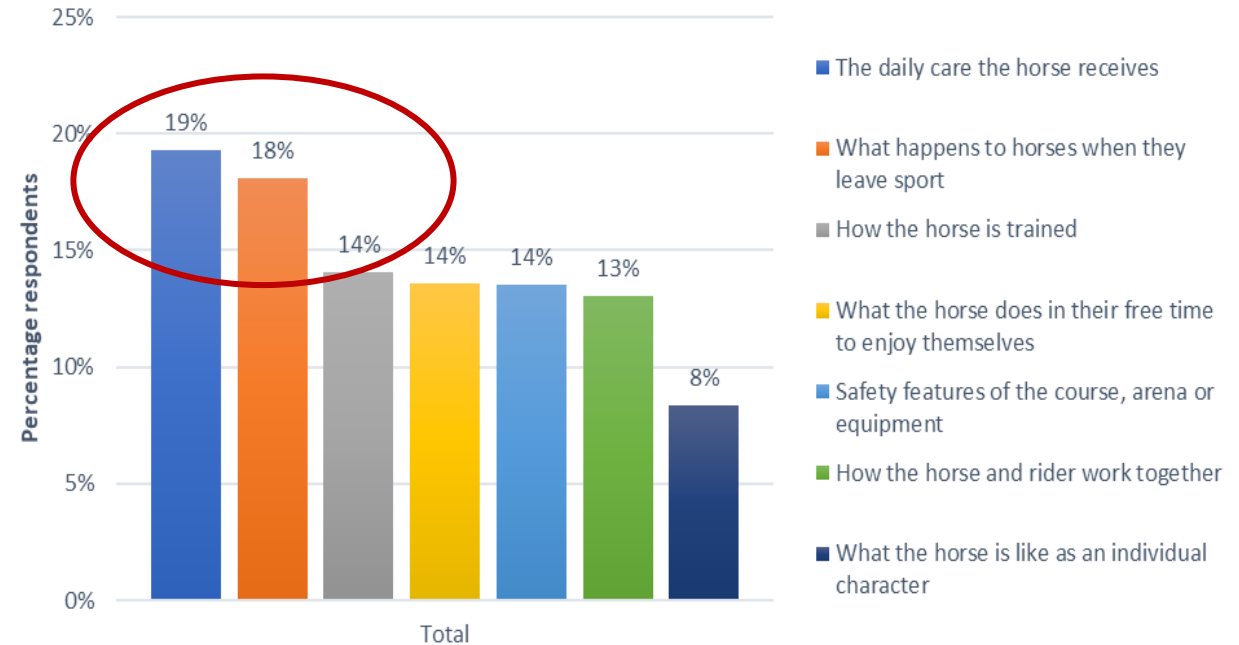
Recommendation 12

Proactively and positively engage with the public.

Recommendation 16

Require mandatory collection and publication of comprehensive lifecycle information (birth to death health/travel/event attendance/ownership/performance records) and injury statistics for horses involved in sport, alongside a trusted identification registration and traceability system.

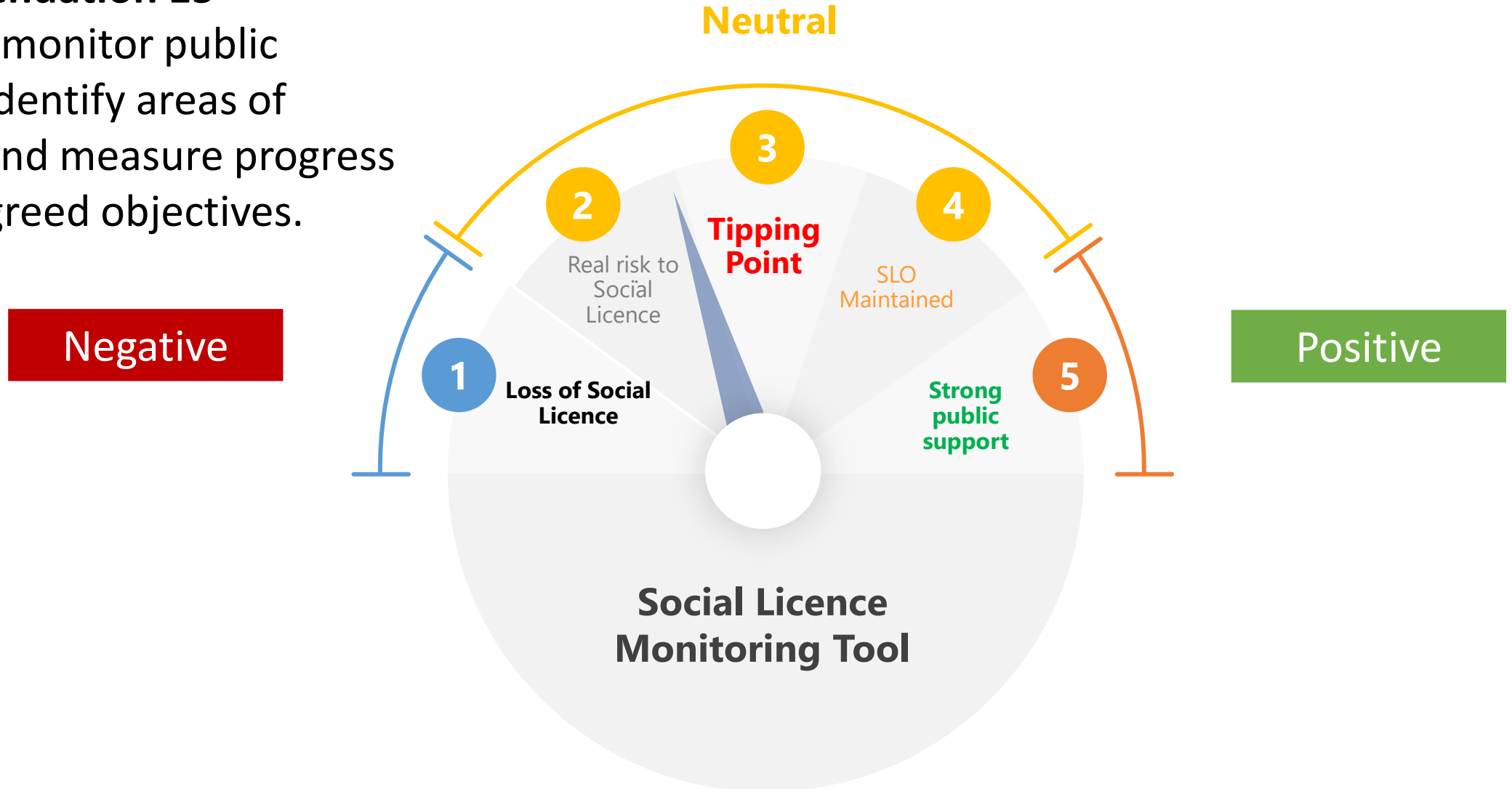
What would you like to see or hear more about to improve your confidence in horse welfare?



The FEI will be transparent

Recommendation 15

Regularly monitor public opinion, identify areas of concern and measure progress against agreed objectives.



4. The FEI will be ProActive

Objective: The FEI must be prepared to challenge the status quo and demonstrate a dynamic path of action towards achieving the highest standards of equine welfare, taking their stakeholders with them.



6 Recommendations:

- 1. Ensure all FEI Equestrians commit to the Equestrian Charter*
- 2. Update the FEI Code of Conduct to reflect the 'Good Life for Horses' Strategy*
- 3. Develop a plan for addressing the 6 priority areas of focus*
- 4. Establish core equine ethics and wellbeing education programme*
- 5. Empower Officials for effective enforcement and make them more accountable*
- 6. Consider transport and recommend acceptable journey frequency and lengths*

Be ProActive - The Equestrian Charter

The FEI Equestrian Charter

Equine welfare involves the physical, psychological, social and environmental well-being of the horse, and all horses involved in sport and leisure activities should be able to live a good life. The FEI requires all those involved in sport involving horses adhere to the FEI Code of Conduct, and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount by pledging to the FEI **Equestrian Charter**.

1. I understand that it is a privilege to involve horses in sport and this comes with responsibilities to the horse.
2. I commit to respecting the horse as a sentient creature capable of feeling both positive and negative emotions, and to ensuring its welfare is always my priority.
3. I undertake to continually develop my understanding of horse behaviour and welfare needs, and to proactively use this knowledge to provide a good life for horses with which I am involved.

Name _____

Signature _____

- A clear commitment to the horse, to understanding and carrying out our responsibilities and being accountable for our horses' welfare.

- *What:* I Understand my responsibility
- *Who:* I Commit to the horse
- *How:* I Undertake to provide a Good Life for horses



Be ProActive – Use ‘Six Strategic Enablers’ to address the Key Priority Areas of focus



Evidence:

Improving credibility through being research led



Education:

Promoting effective knowledge transfer to ensure optimised standards of equine wellbeing



Engagement:

Requiring transparency, through clear and timely communication



Effective Regulation:

Safe-guarding equine welfare especially where there may be competing agendas



Enforcement:

Ensuring clear understanding of the rules and effective compliance by all involved with sports horses



Empowerment:

Promoting a culture of personal responsibility for equine welfare and wellbeing

FEI Support / Strong National Federation and International Equestrian Stakeholder Engagement
/ Knowledge of Equine Ethics and Welfare / Consideration of Public Opinion

5. The FEI will be Accountable

Objective: The FEI will achieve higher standards of welfare and earn trust more sustainably by inviting external scrutiny.



2 Recommendations:

1. Implement additional 'fit to compete' checks using trained professionals and FEI officials
2. Establish a permanent Independent Advisory Committee to act as a 'critical friend regarding matters of equine welfare

The FEI will be Accountable

Stakeholder group comments – Equestrian respondents



“Pain indicators in horses are ignored by the judges”

“Promoting combinations demonstrating clear violations of kind/correct training”

“Unhealthy conformation and movements are prized”

“Judges biased and scoring favorites higher, even for poorer tests”

“Officials feeling pressured to allow ‘horses not fit to compete’ start in a competition”

Everyone is responsible for the future of equestrian sports. All equestrians need to optimize and prioritize equine welfare and be seen to be doing so

Equine Stakeholders



- 
- 01 Be a Leader
 - 02 Be Trusted
 - 03 Be Transparent
 - 04 Be ProActive
 - 05 Be Accountable

More information - Commission Website

Public Attitudes on the Use of
Horses in Sport: Survey Report
(November 2022)



Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

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Opinions of Equestrian
Stakeholders on the use of Horses
in Sport: Survey Report
(November 2022)

What is the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission?

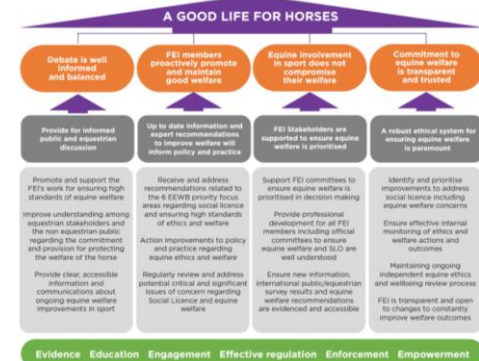
equinewellbeing.fei.org



An independent Commission established by the FEI

EEWB Strategic Approach

Maintain Social Licence for the involvement of horses in sport



Evidence Education Engagement Effective regulation Enforcement Empowerment

The 'Good Life' for Horses: A commitment to maintain and improve the Social Licence to Operate



Thank you

We are grateful to **all** who have generously provided us with support and help in carrying out the Commission's work.



USEQUESTRIAN
2024 ANNUAL MEETING
& AWARDS