



Social License <or Licence> to Operate

As presented by Dr. Camie Heleski, University of Kentucky, camie.heleski@uky.edu

What is 'Social Licence to Operate'?

(a brief review prior to Roly Owers' presentation)

An unwritten social contract between the public and an industry or community

Many industries - and sports - seeking to protect and strengthen their social licence

Issues in sport include sustainability, integrity, safety, doping, etc.

Equestrian sport is unique – more vulnerable to negative public opinion - because it involves use of an animal *(a beloved animal at that)*

The risk of loss of social licence applies to all sports which use animals

All equestrian sports increasingly coming under the spotlight (endurance, reining, dressage and show-jumping, etc.)

Society does not distinguish between different equestrian sports

Society does not recognise a difference between FEI and non-FEI regulated sports

In some cases the public don't distinguish between species (all animals used in sport or entertainment)

The public will prioritise emotion over evidence in deciding to grant social licence or not.

The Commission members – ‘Critical Friends’

External



Nat Waran (Chair)



Kathalijne Visser



Camie Heleski



Jessica Stark



Madeleine Campbell

Internal



Cayetano Martínez de Irujo



Ken Lalo



Theo Ploegmakers



Cesar Hirsch



Sabrina Ibáñez

Why now? Society cares more - rising concerns about use of horses in sport



Sports

PETA calls on IOC president to remove equestrian events from Games



Photo: Horse and Hound magazine

Opinion

Equestrian sports have an animal cruelty problem - dressage should be banned from the Olympics

In my experience, the most distressed horses are always those who come from the horse racing industry



Society's views on using horses in sport must be acknowledged, says charity boss

November 22, 2017 | Horsetalk.co.nz | 0 Comments



The winning amateur picture in the 2014 FEI Solidarity World Photo Grand Prix. © FEI



Journal of Veterinary Behavior
Volume 36, March-April 2020, Pages 40-47

Equine Research

An investigation into equestrian spur use in the United Kingdom

Chloe Lemon, Victoria Lewis, Lucy Dumbell, Hieke Brown

PETA steps up call for equestrian events to be banned from Olympics as FEI probes German video footage



@StrangeChannel youtube

New rules on horse nosebands needed to prevent distress, say researchers

Study found horses' heart rates increased and they struggled to chew when nosebands were over-tightened, leading to calls for stricter regulations on use



Why now? We know more

Increase in research and knowledge about equine welfare

Review > [Animals \(Basel\)](#). 2022 May 5;12(9):1186. doi: 10.3390/ani12091186.

Champing at the Bit for Improvements: A Review of Equine Welfare in Equestrian Sports in the United Kingdom

Tim Q Holmes ¹, Ashleigh F Brown ²

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 35565612 PMCID: [PMC9100173](#) DOI: [10.3390/ani12091186](#)

[Free PMC article](#)

> [Animals \(Basel\)](#). 2021 Nov 12;11(11):3228. doi: 10.3390/ani11113228.

How Happy Are Equine Athletes? Stakeholder Perceptions of Equine Welfare Issues Associated with Equestrian Sport

Tamzin Furtado ¹, Liane Preshaw ², Jo Hockenhill ³, Jennifer Wathan ⁴, Janet Douglas ⁵, Sue Horseman ³, Rebecca Smith ¹, Danica Pollard ⁶, Gina Pinchbeck ¹, Jan Rogers ², Carol Hall ^{7,8}

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 34827960 PMCID: [PMC8614509](#) DOI: [10.3390/ani11113228](#)

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Abstract

The international governing body for equestrian sports, the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), states that the welfare of the horse must be paramount and never subordinated to competitive or

Open Access Review

Thoroughbred Racehorse Welfare through the Lens of 'Social License to Operate—With an Emphasis on a U.S. Perspective

by Camie Heleski ^{1,†}, C. Jill Stowe ², Julie Fiedler ³, Michael L. Peterson ⁴, Colleen Brady ⁵, Carissa Wickens ⁶ and James N. MacLeod ⁷

¹ Department of Animal and Food Sciences and UK Ag Equine Programs, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506, USA

² Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506, USA

³ Central Queensland University, Norman Gardens, Queensland 4701, Australia

⁴ Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506, USA

⁵ Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA

⁶ Department of Animal Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, USA

⁷ Department of Veterinary Science, Gluck Equine Research Center, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506, USA

* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

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(This article belongs to the Special Issue Sustainability in the Equine Industry)

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Abstract

This review addresses the question of whether Thoroughbred horse racing is sustainable in the context of current social values, recently acknowledged framework, known as 'Social License to Operate' (SLO), provides us with a lens through which to view & assess racehorse welfare. In multiple surveys of the general public, the horse owning public, and university students, the primary topics of concern regarding Thoroughbred racing show considerable concordance: concern about catastrophic injuries—particularly as related to track surfaces; concern over the racism of two-year-olds; win use by jockeys; drug/medication policies

> [Animals \(Basel\)](#). 2021 Jun 9;11(6):1725. doi: 10.3390/ani11061725.

An Ethical Framework for the Use of Horses in Competitive Sport: Theory and Function

Madeleine L H Campbell ¹

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 34207809 PMCID: [PMC8230307](#) DOI: [10.3390/ani11061725](#)

[Free PMC article](#)

Abstract

PREV. RESULT Ethical concern about equestrian sport is reflected in publications by regulatory authorities, 5 of 100 charities, and the lay press; and in government debate and social media. However, attempts by regulators and stakeholders to address ethical issues in equine sport have been discipline specific and

Review > [Animals \(Basel\)](#). 2022 Aug 5;12(15):1987. doi: 10.3390/ani12151987.

Social Licence to Operate: What Can Equestrian Sports Learn from Other Industries?

Janet Douglas ¹, Roly Owers ¹, Madeleine L H Campbell ²

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 35953977 PMCID: [PMC9367437](#) DOI: [10.3390/ani12151987](#)

[Free PMC article](#)

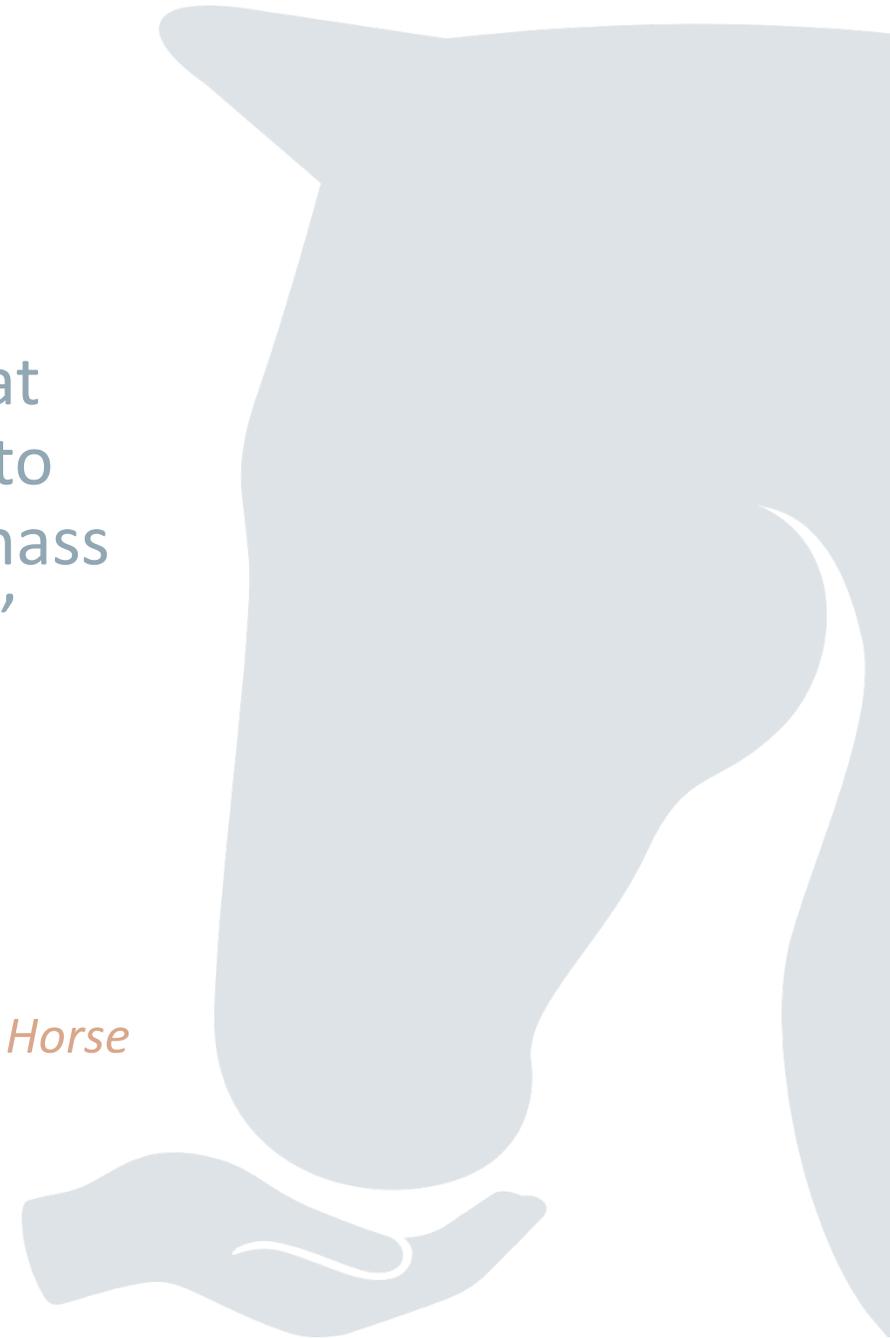
Abstract

The concept of 'social licence to operate' (SLO) is relevant to all animal-use activities. An SLO is an intangible, implicit agreement between the public and an industry/group. Its existence allows that industry/group to pursue its activities with minimal formalised restrictions because such activities have widespread societal approval. In contrast, the imposition of legal restrictions—or even an outright ban—reflect qualified or lack of public support for an activity. This review discusses current threats to equestrianism's SLO and suggests actions that those across the equine sector need to take to justify the continuation of the SLO. The most important of these is earning the trust of all stakeholders, including the public. Trust requires transparency of operations, establishment and communication of

Why us? – a tipping point

‘....professional equestrian bodies have stressed that modern pentathlon has nothing to do with us. But to the general public, horse sport is one amorphous mass – **the Saint Boy crisis has everything to do with us.**’

P. Cuckson, Modern Pentathlon: Nothing, Yet Everything, to Do With Us, Horse Sport (August 2021)



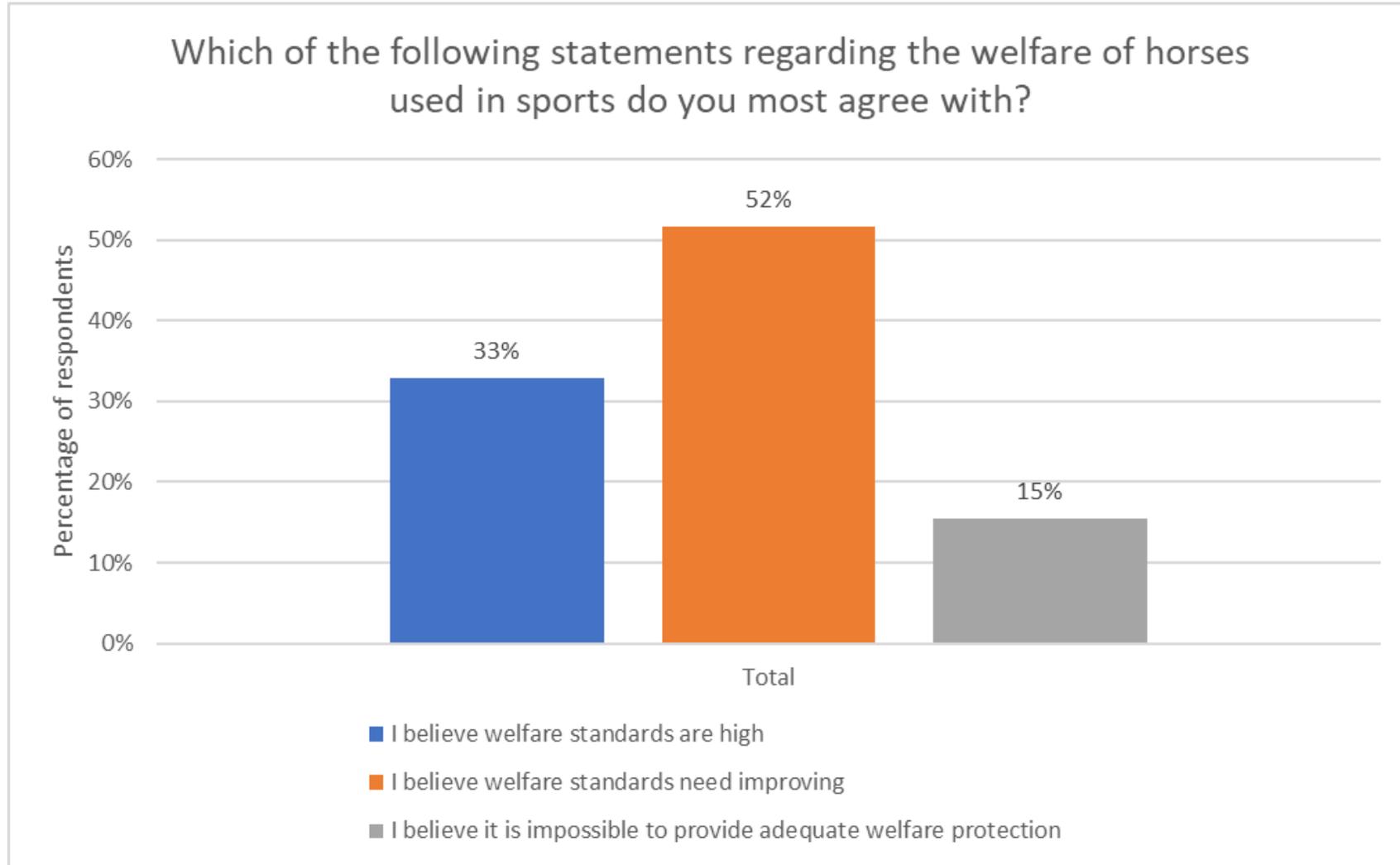
Social Licence – What do we know?

Two Surveys to understand the viewpoints of public and equestrians **inside and outside** the FEI

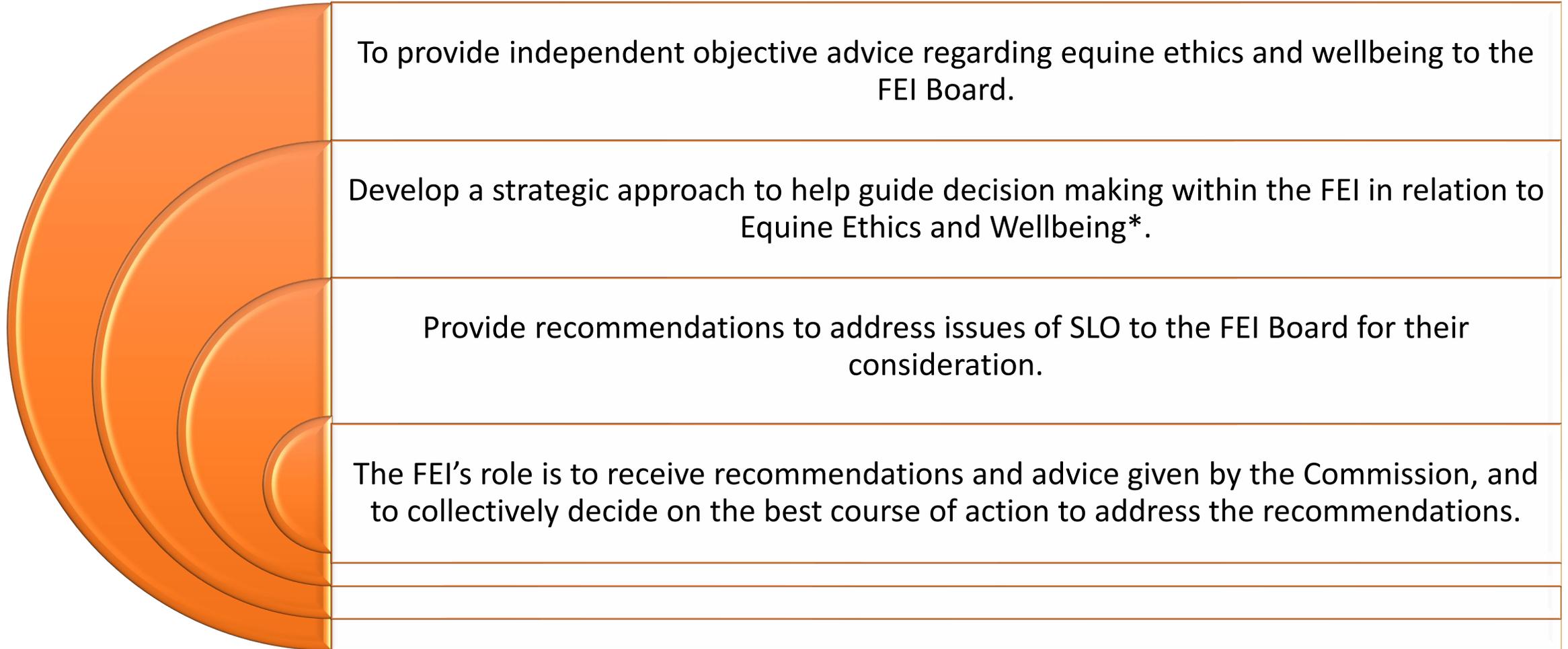
- Survey among Equestrian community (almost 28,000 respondents) From 116 countries; 2698 from US (2nd most)
- Survey among Public (over 14,000 respondents) Strategically polled ~1000 people from each of 14 countries (1005 responses from US)



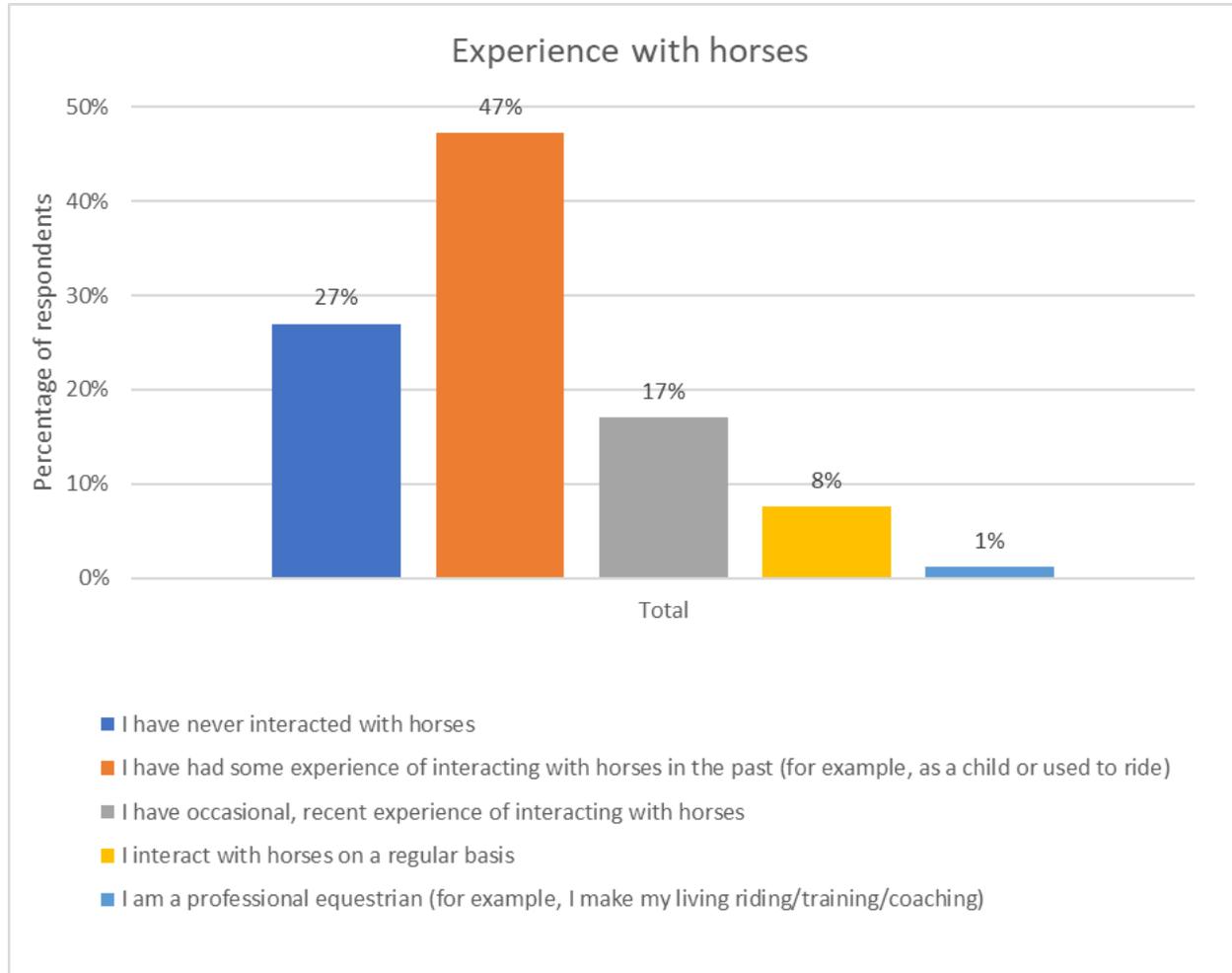
Is the Iceberg melting? – Public perception



The Commission's role

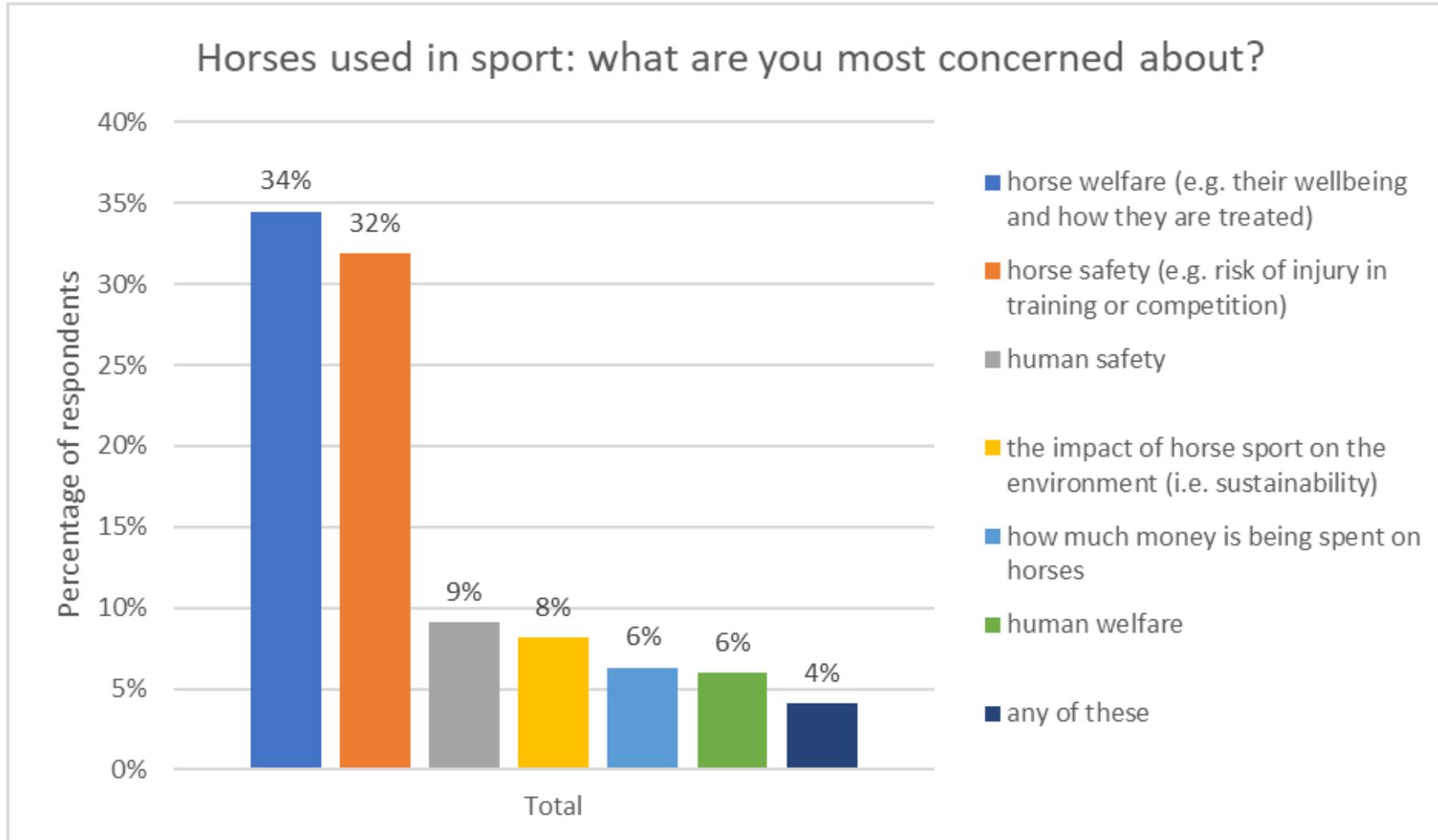


The public respondents – *who are they?*

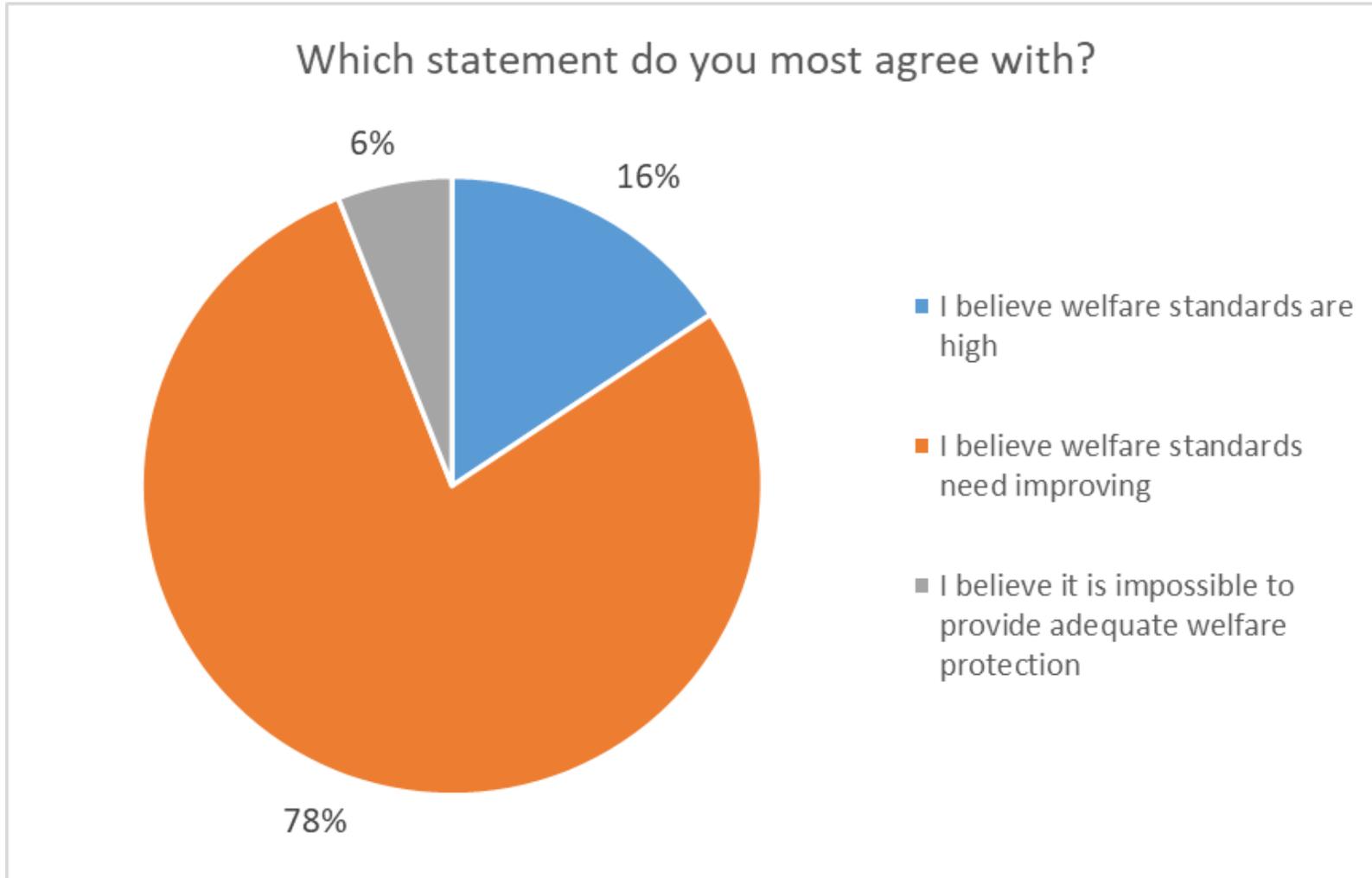




What were the main Concerns of the public ?



Equestrian Stakeholders feel welfare standards need improving



What are Equestrian stakeholders concerned about?

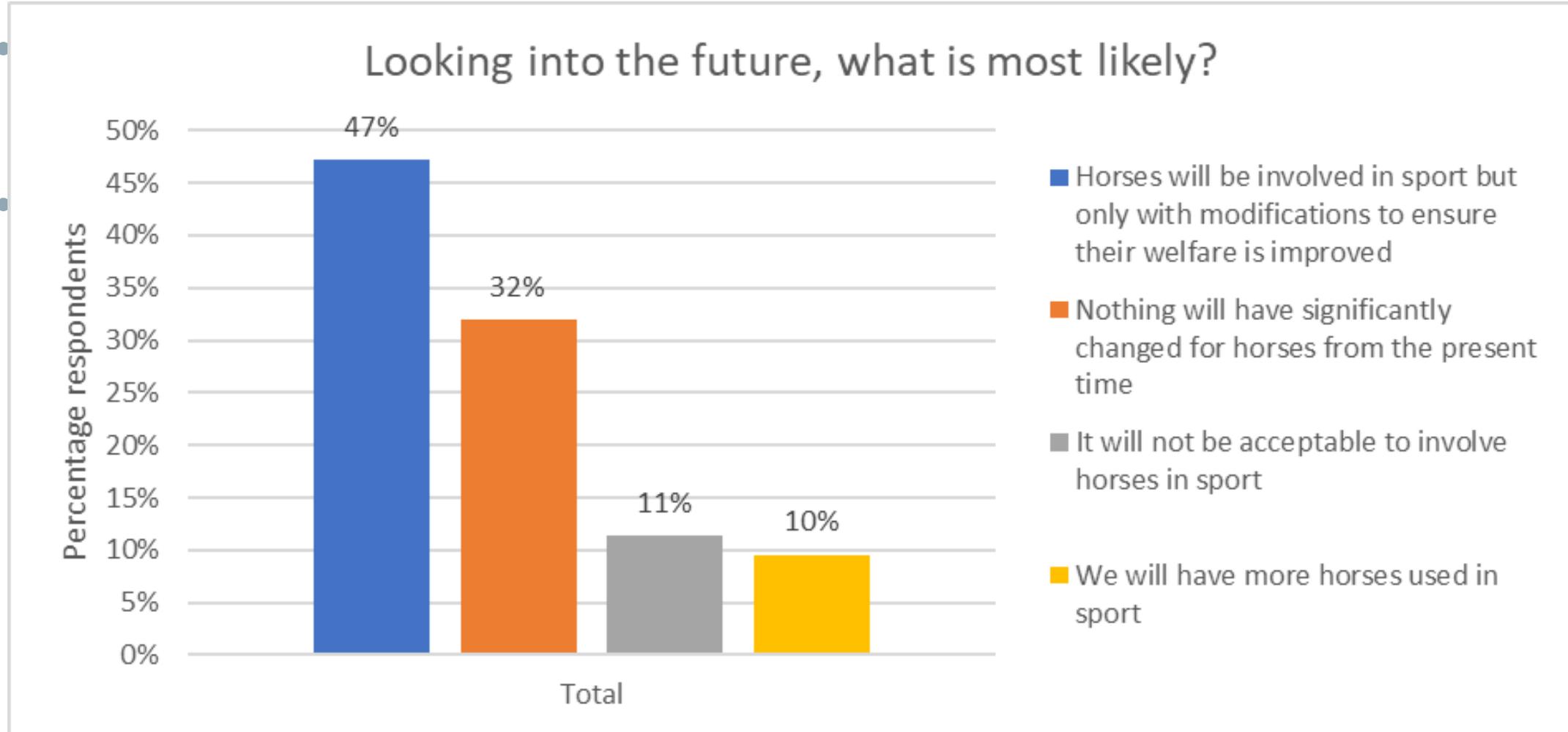


What did you tell us? - *6 Priority focus areas*

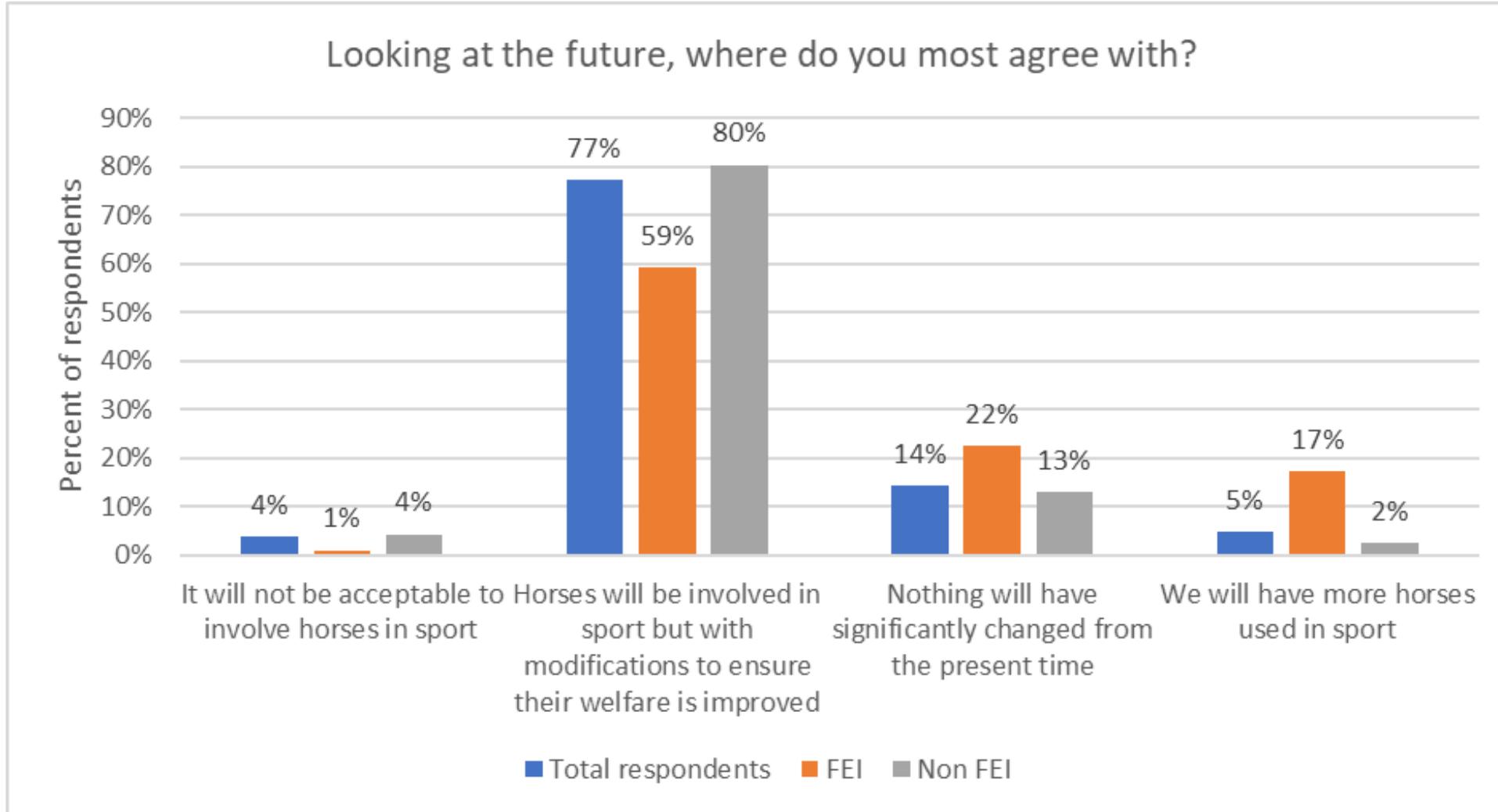




How do the Public feel about the future of horse use in sport?



What about the Equestrian Stakeholders?



Introduction to the proposed FEI Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Strategy

Strategic Objectives:

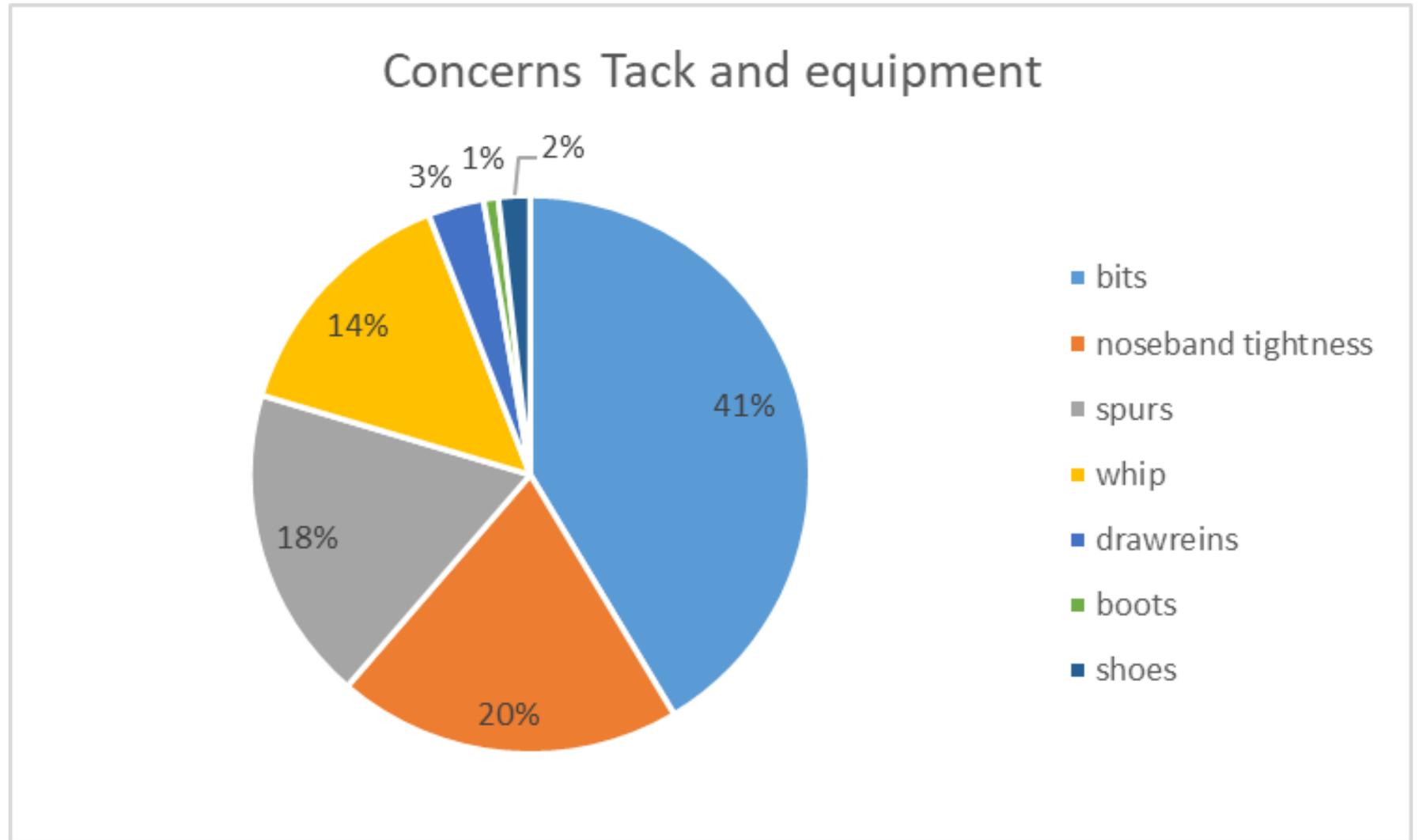
1. To ensure that horses used in sport experience positive welfare throughout their working lives
2. To guide FEI regulations, policies and practices, and inform wider-reaching advocacy and influence
3. Through (1) and (2) to ensure continued social acceptance of the involvement of horses in sport

Proposed underpinning principles *(The FEI Equestrian Charter)*

- Appreciation that horses are sentient creatures
- Recognition that horses should have agency
- Agreement that horse welfare is of the highest priority
- Agreement that policy and practice that influences equine welfare should be based on the best available evidence
- Understanding that continued use of horses in sport relies upon maintaining society's confidence and support
- Commitment to continued professional development in relation to equine welfare needs
- Endorsement of a zero tolerance for any activity which compromises equine welfare or brings the reputation/integrity of equestrian sport into question.



Use of Research Evidence



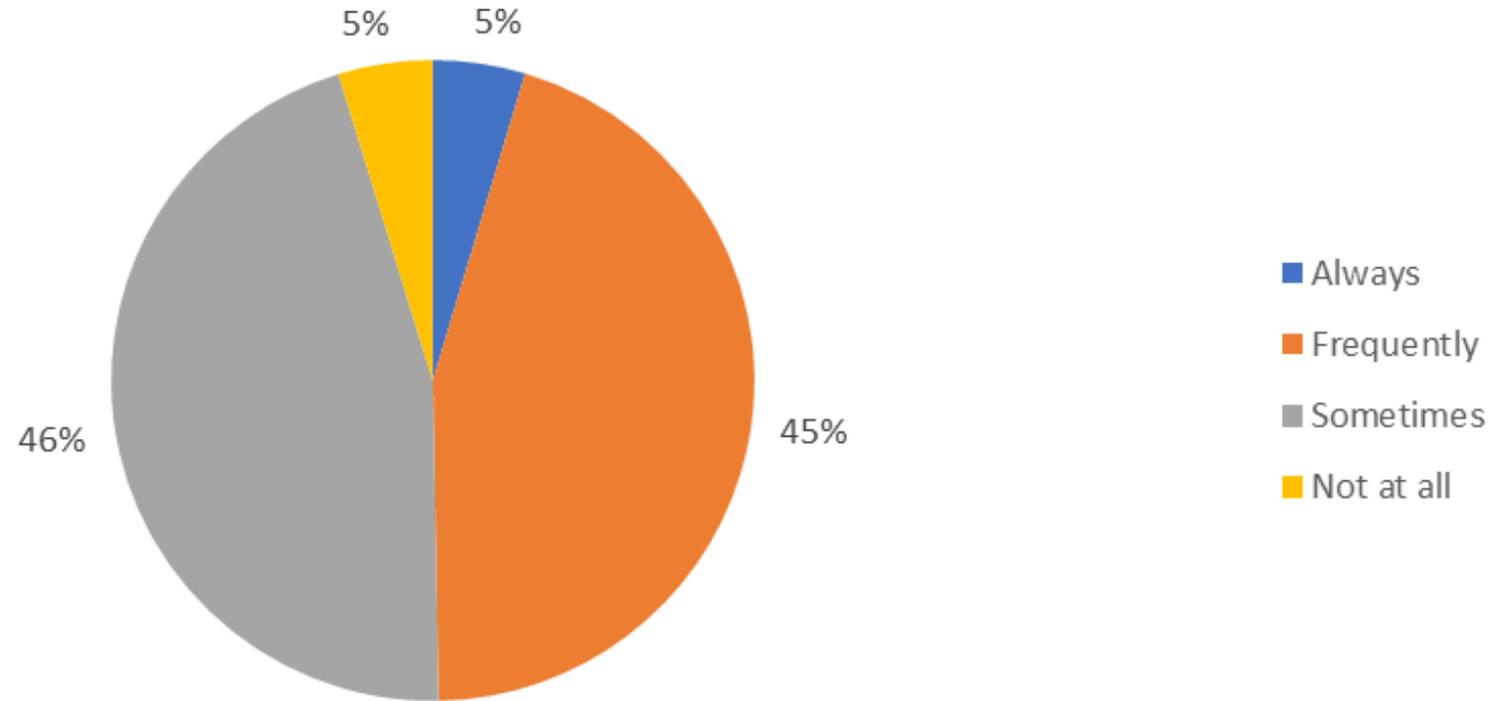
Basis for Commission Recommendations

- **Public and Equestrian Survey Results**
- **Data from other external agencies and Reports regarding SLO concerns**
- **Current Research evidence** – What is the latest research related to equine wellbeing and ethics? Where are the gaps in our knowledge and do they need to be addressed
- **Consultation with Equine Stakeholder and Equine welfare experts** – To unpack the specific concerns/ positives/needs/solutions of different groups related to equestrian sport –

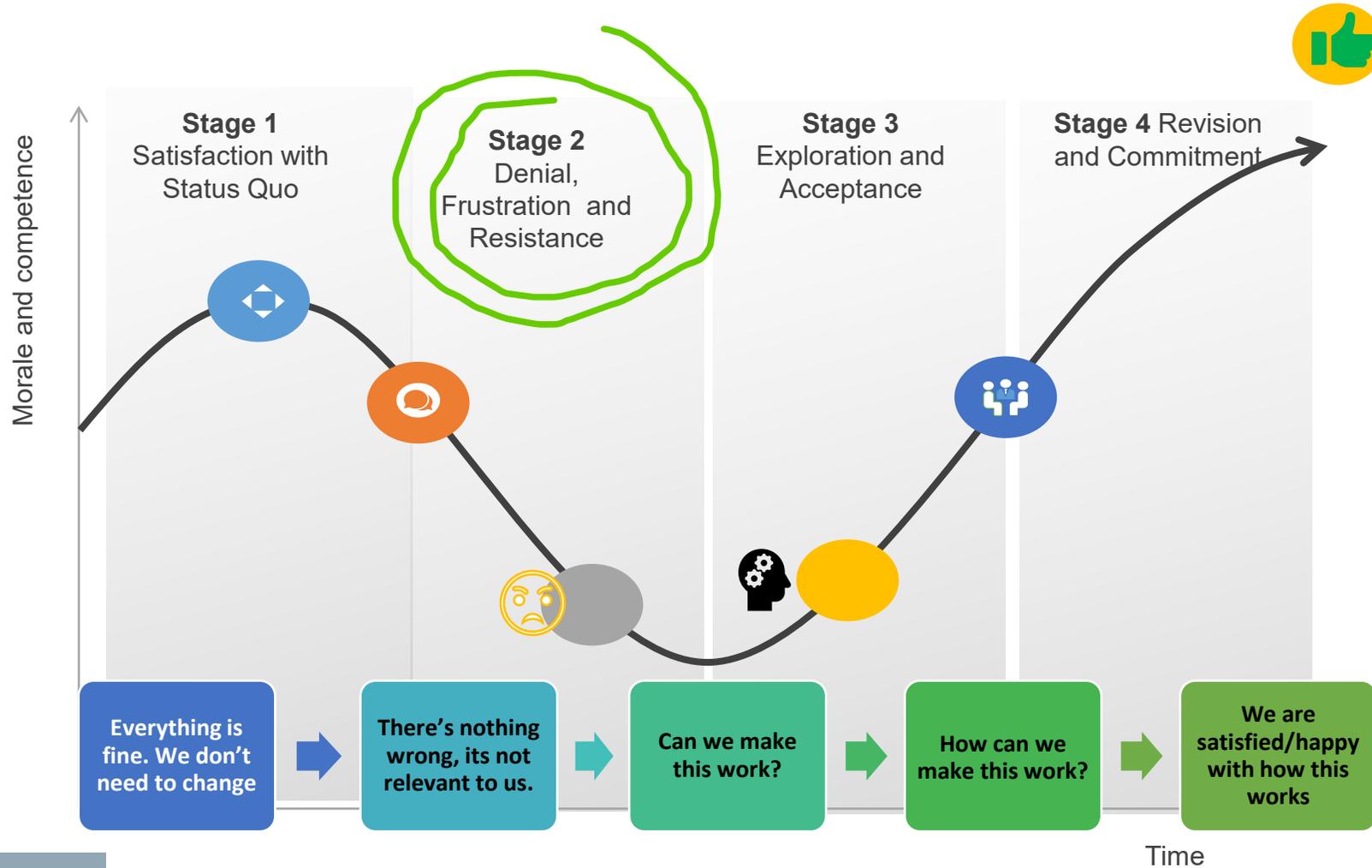


Changes are needed ...

To what extent do you believe horses enjoy being used in sport?



Change in relation to SLO



Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

Gather Relevant SLO Information

Communicate to support Understanding

Recommend Direction of Change

Provide Support and Advice

Monitor and Review Progress

Everyone involved in equestrianism needs to:

*Not only optimise and prioritise equine welfare because it is the 'right thing to do', but also **to be seen to be doing so.***

***Understand their responsibility** – and the impact of their actions/words and use of images*

*Ensure that **they actively engage with and address concerns** related to Social Licence*

equinewellbeing.fei.org



Thank you