



NEWWC
NATIONAL EQUINE
WELFARE COUNCIL
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The impact of the rising cost of living on equine rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations

Survey findings | June 2024

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The impact of the rising cost of living on equine
rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations
Background

01. Back- ground

The National Equine Welfare Council (NEWC) has been a united voice on equine welfare matters for over three decades, with member organisations from across the equine sector in the UK.

In January and February 2024, World Horse Welfare conducted a survey on behalf of NEWC, with the objective to gather evidence about the impact of the continued high cost of living on equine rescue centres, sanctuaries, and rehoming organisations across the United Kingdom.

Our aim is to share the information we have gathered from this survey, alongside findings from a survey aimed at horse owners, with the United Kingdom and devolved governments, and to identify what educational material may be helpful.

This survey is a follow-up to a [similar survey from December and January 2023](#). The results from the 2023 survey were shared with the UK Parliament's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee as part of NEWC's effort to inform decision makers on equine welfare issues.



The impact of the rising cost of living on equine
rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations
Summary

02.

Summary

All rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations that responded to the survey are concerned with the rise in the cost of living.

A majority have seen an increase in operational costs compared to this time last year, in areas such as general maintenance of premises, management of equines, veterinary care, and insurance. Most expect costs to continue rising, and many are facing additional challenges due to fewer and lower donations.

A majority report seeing an increase in welfare cases, in calls from the public to hand over an equine, and in advice calls about an equine other than the caller's own. In spite of the increasing costs, most are not keen on cutting costs by making changes that will impact the management of the equines in their care.

The general trend is similar to last year. A majority of organisations are experiencing continued rising costs and an increase in welfare cases. Additionally, a greater number of organisations are reporting challenges such as fewer and lower donations and difficulty hiring staff and volunteers.

Anecdotal evidence from some of the larger NEWC member charities indicates that the trend towards a rise in welfare concerns is continuing, and in some cases even accelerating, since the survey closed.



The impact of the rising cost of living on equine
rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations
At a glance

03.

At a

glance

The impact of the rising cost of living on equine rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations
At a glance

2023	2024
36 organisations responded.	29 organisations responded.
100% said they are concerned with rising costs.	100% said they are concerned with rising costs.
20 organisations (55.6%) said they were extremely concerned with rising costs.	15 organisations (51.7%) said they are extremely concerned with rising costs.
Median maximum ideal stocking density is 39 equines with a range between 10 and 2534 equines.	Median maximum ideal stocking density is 50 equines with a range between 3 and 2500 equines.
12 organisations (33.3%) reported being at or over capacity.	10 organisations (34%) said they are at or over capacity.
16 organisations (44.4%) said they were worried about maintaining operations over the winter.	14 organisations (48.3%) said they were worried about maintaining operations over the winter.
7 organisations (19.4%) were extremely worried about maintaining operations over the winter.	1 organisation (3.4%) said it was extremely worried about maintaining operations over the winter.
20 organisations (58.8%*) said they had noticed an increase in welfare cases involving equines. <small>*2 organisations were excluded from the analysis because they responded "not applicable"</small>	17 organisations (58.6%) said they are noticing an increase in welfare cases involving equines.
28 organisations (77.8%) said they had noticed an increase in calls from the public wishing to hand over an equine.	22 organisations (75.8%) said they are noticing an increase in calls from the public wishing to hand over an equine.
7 organisations (19.4%) said they were offering financial help to equine keepers, while 6 (16.7%) are considering it.	12 organisations (41.4%) said they are offering financial help to equine keepers, while 2 (6.9%) said they are considering it.

The impact of the rising cost of living on equine
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Participants

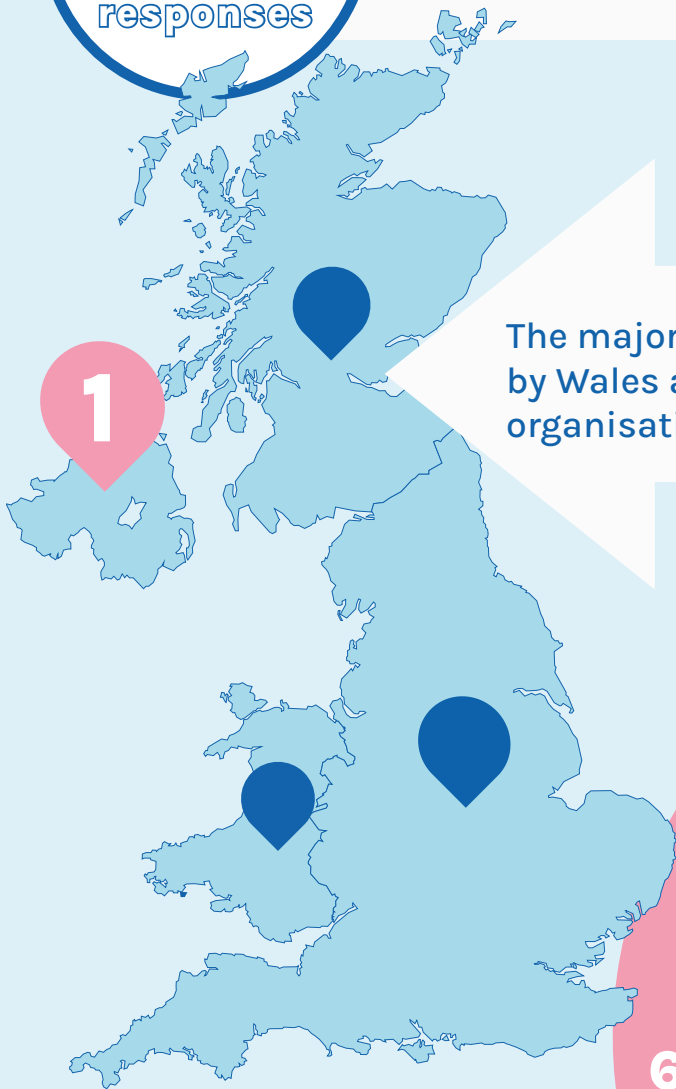
04.

Participants

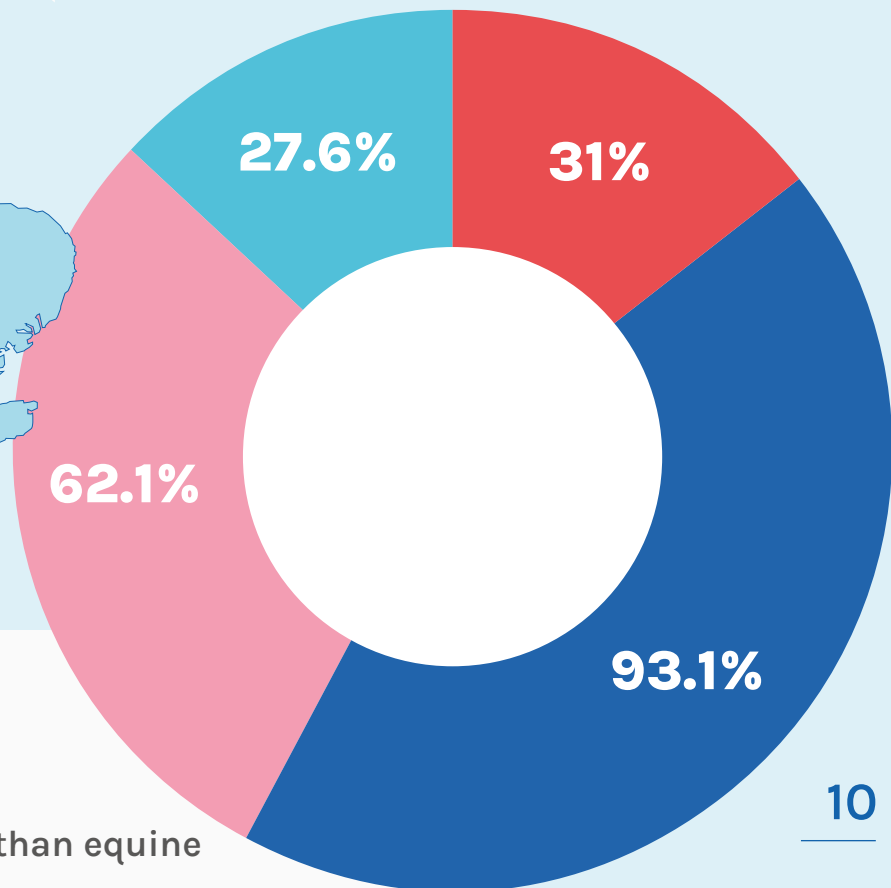
The survey received a total of..



from organisations, compared to...



The majority operate in England, followed by Wales and Scotland. Only one of the participating organisations operates in Northern Ireland.



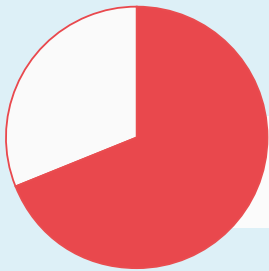
What type of equines are in your organisation's care?

- Horses/ponies
- Donkeys
- Mules/hinnies
- Species other than equine

The impact of the rising cost of living on equine rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations
Participants

The annual turnover of the participating organisations ranges from under £20,000 to over £1,000,000.

Under
£20,000
to over
£1,000,000



69% have an annual turnover of over £100,000, and **31%** over £1,000,000.

The **maximum ideal stocking density** for the participating organisations ranged from...

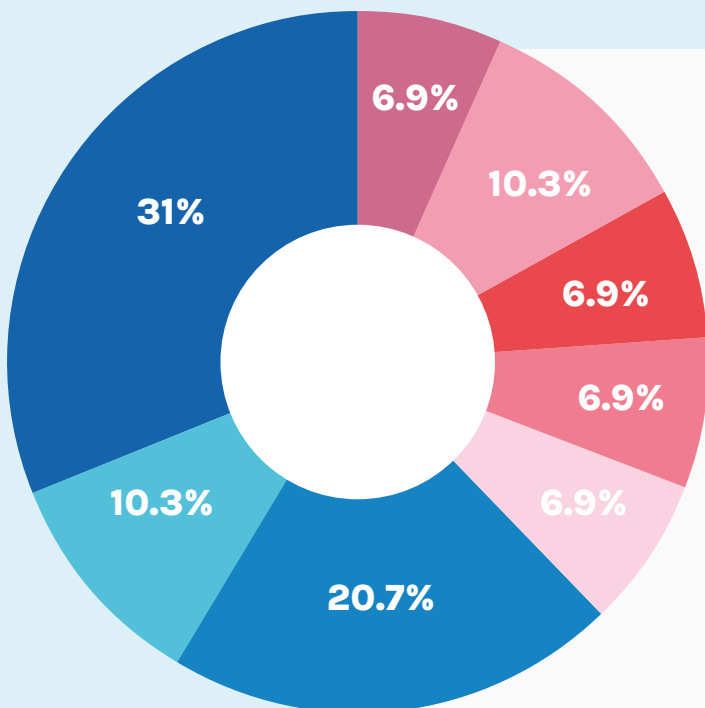
3 to 2500

equines with a median of

50 equines



At the time of the survey,
10 organisations (34%)
reported being at or over capacity



What is the annual turnover of your organisation? By annual turnover, we mean the total business income for the year (gross revenue).

- Under £20,000
- £20,001 - £60,000
- £60,001 - £100,000
- £100,001 - £200,000
- £200,001 - £500,000
- £500,001 - £1,000,000
- Over £1,000,000
- Don't know

The impact of the rising cost of living on equine
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Key findings

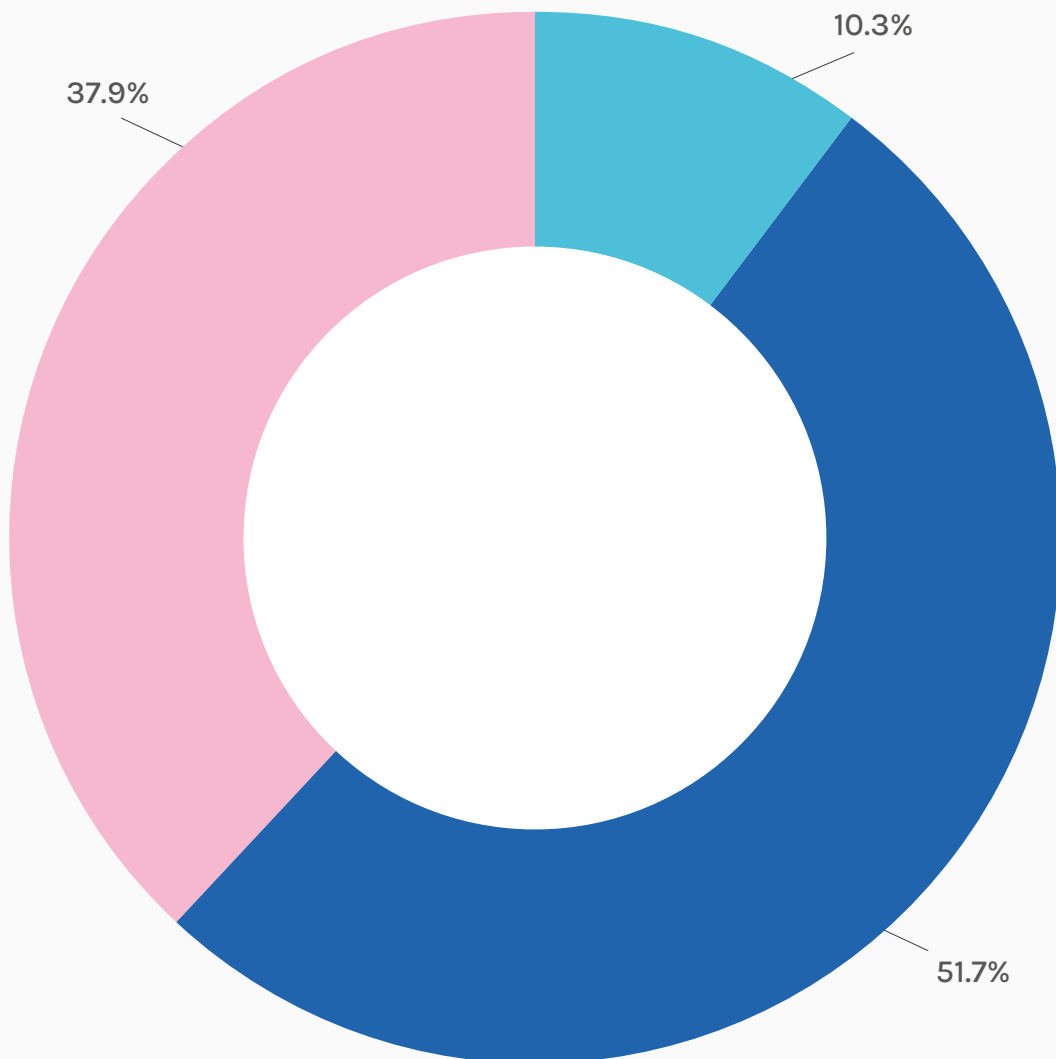
05.

Key
findings

1.

All participants are concerned with the rise in the cost of living, with roughly half (51.7%) saying they are extremely concerned. This corresponds broadly to the responses from the 2023 survey.

How concerned is your organisation with the cost of living?



● Extremely concerned ● Moderately concerned ● Slightly concerned

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Key findings

Concerns include increased operational costs, an increase in welfare cases, fewer and smaller donations, and the impact of rising costs on the health and well-being of staff and volunteers.

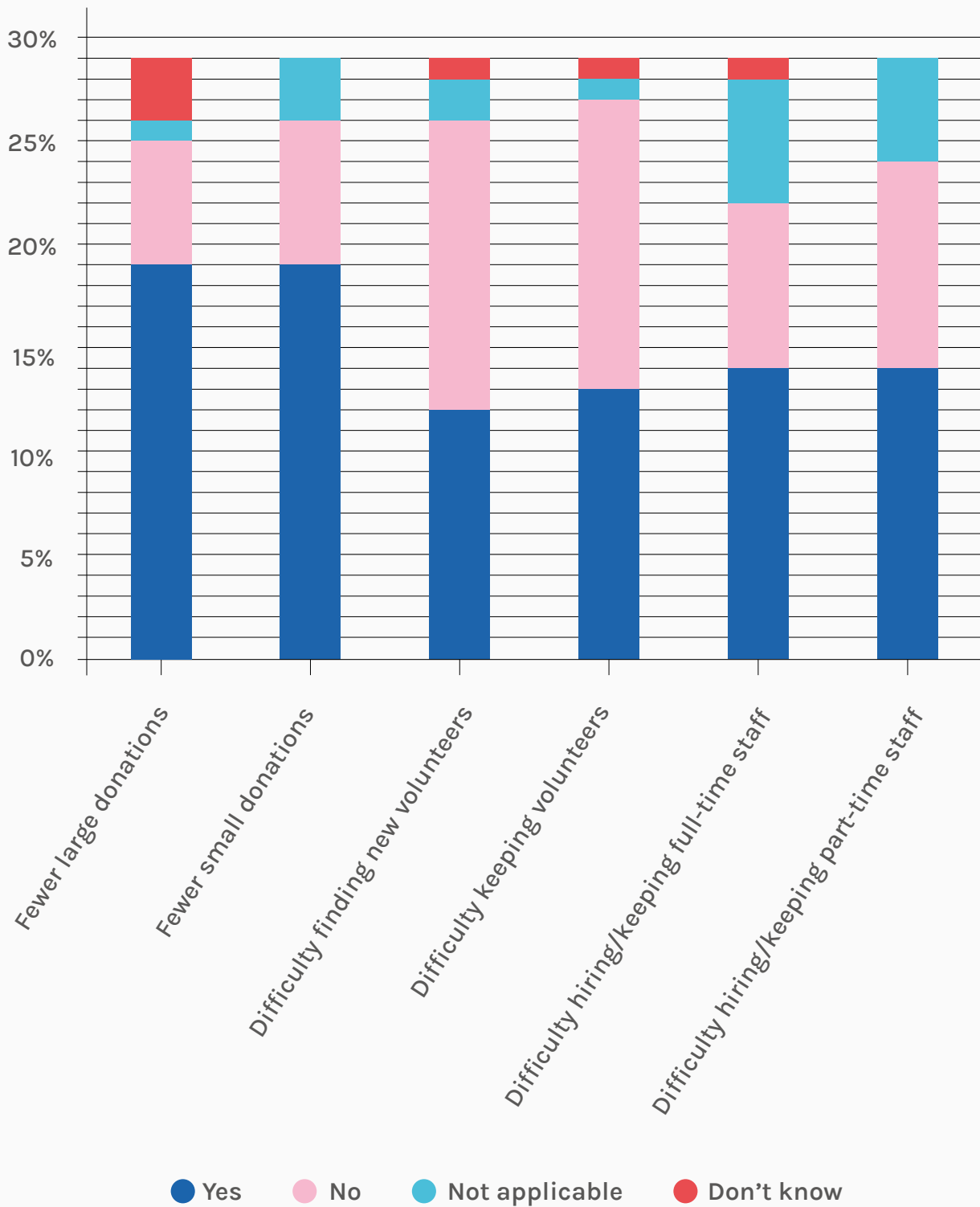
“We have noticed a change in the level of supporters, for example, for our sponsor a horse scheme. We have had a number of people stop their sponsorship citing the cost-of-living crisis as the reason. The same for some of the smaller regular donations. We also feel that corporates are looking at their charitable donations and are making different decisions there, particularly the smaller, local companies.”

“The cost-of-living crisis is certainly a worry, and we are gearing up to expect a surge in returning horses initially - we are looking at creating crisis management plans should we be inundated with returning horses on mass and are working hard to drive throughput so that we can create space to accommodate new intakes.”

“We need to budget carefully. Create ways to raise income and not compromise the health and wellbeing of our animals and staff.”



Has your organisation experienced any of the following changes in the last year?

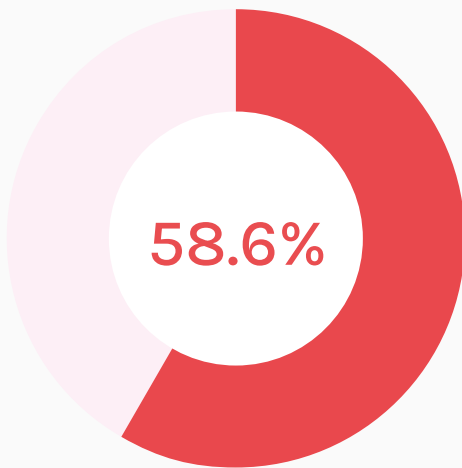


2.

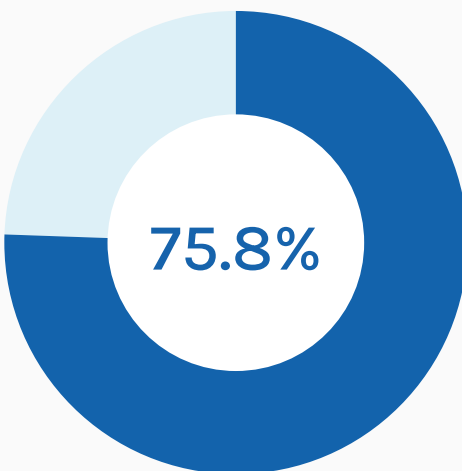
Almost half (48.3%) of participants were worried about maintaining current operations over the winter. Encouragingly, only one organisation (3.4%) reports being extremely worried, down from seven (19.4%) last year.



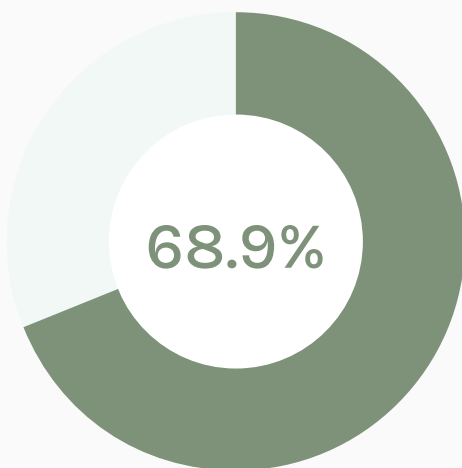
3. Participants have mainly seen an increase in:



have seen an increase in welfare cases involving equines.



have seen an increase in calls from the public wishing to hand over an equine.



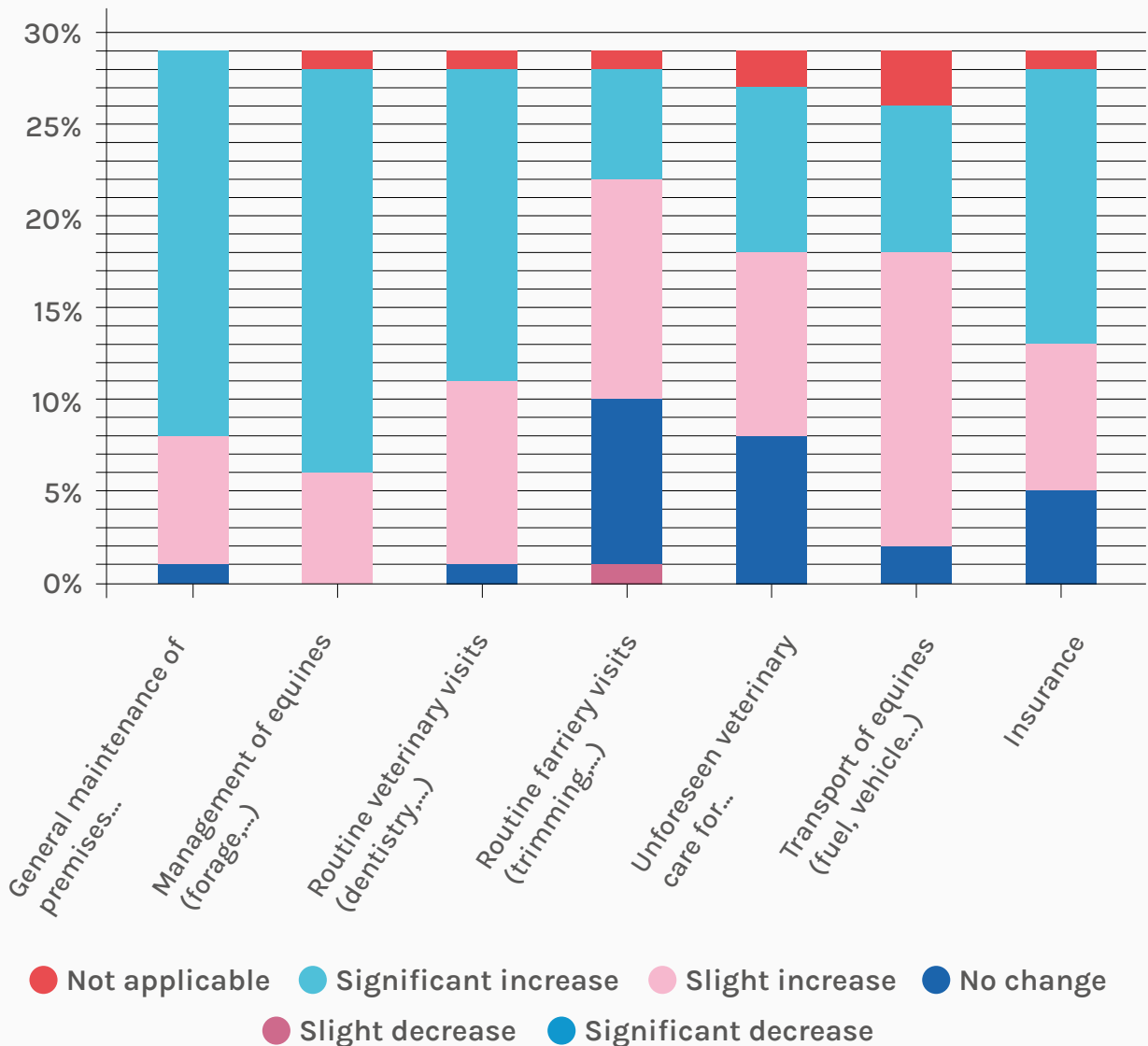
have seen an increase in calls about welfare concerns for equines owned by someone else.

4.

All participants are seeing a rise in operational costs compared to this time last year. The four main areas of concern are general maintenance of premises (such as electricity and water), general management of equines (such as forage and bedding), routine veterinary costs (such as dentistry and vaccinations), and staffing.

Most expect costs to continue rising, across all categories.

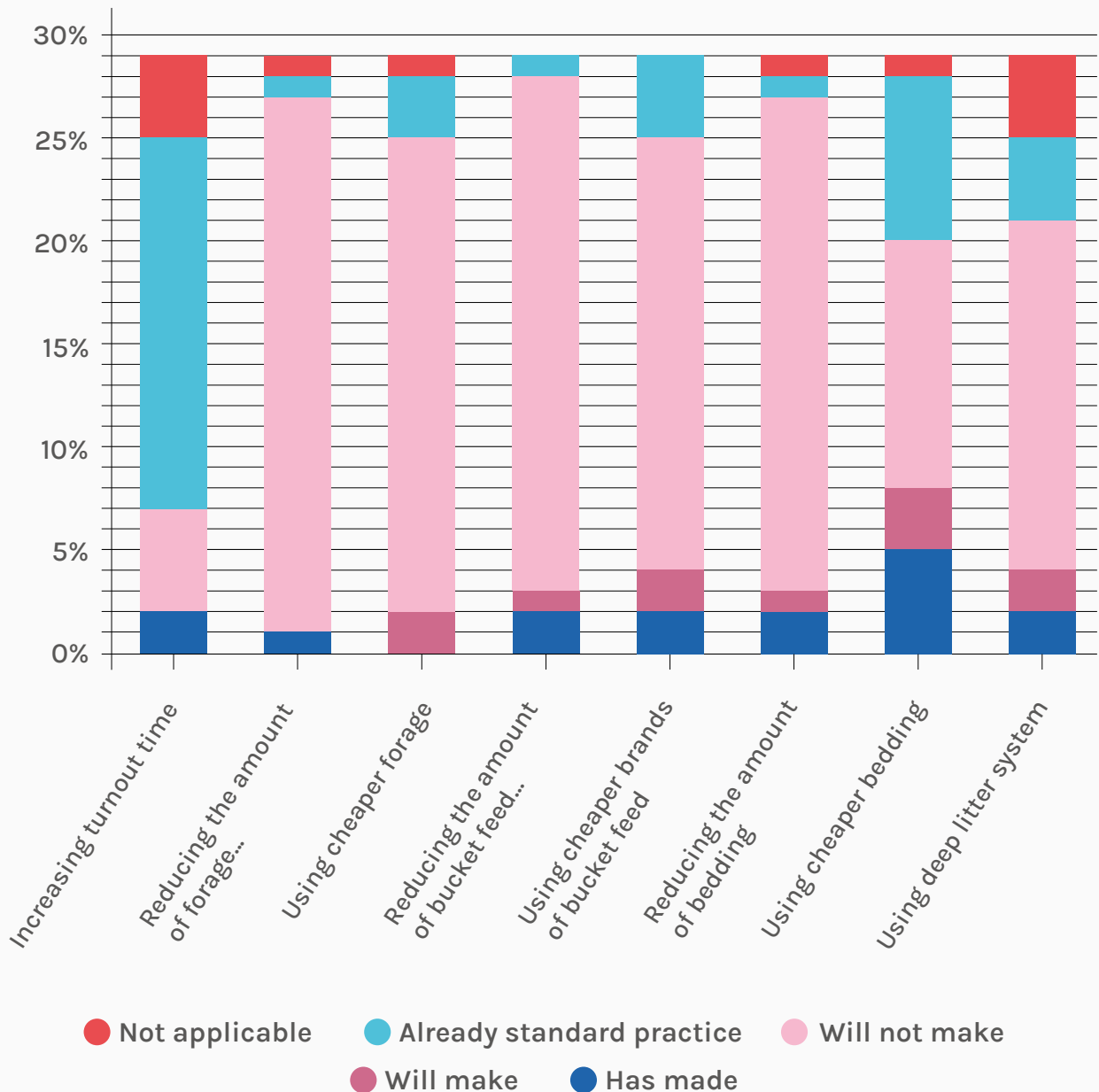
Compared to this time last year, has your organisation experienced a change in costs in any of the following areas?



5.

Like last year, participants are reluctant to make changes that would affect the management of the equines in their care. The change the largest number of participants (27.5%) are considering is switching to cheaper bedding.

Has your organisation made/planned any of the following changes to your equine management in the last/next six months?



6.

A majority (82.7%) of participants say the cost of living has impacted the health and well-being of their staff and volunteers.

“I believe all the staff are concerned that they cannot make their monthly bills and therefore are having to look for other jobs or additional jobs after normal working days, causing the team to be tired and overworked.”

“Part time staff have had to take on additional jobs to cover their cost of living, leading to difficulty finding holiday/sickness cover for yard staff.”

“Staff is being impacted due to the travel they need to do to get to work and the cost of fuel.”



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Next steps

06.

Next

steps

The results from the 2024 survey, along with the results from the 2023 survey, provide evidence about the impact of the rising cost of living on the equine welfare sector. The results indicate that costs remain high across the board and that the situation may be impacting operations for many rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations.

Many organisations report seeing an increase in welfare cases involving equines, and anecdotal evidence from some of the larger NEWC member charities indicates that this trend is continuing into the summer and may in some cases be accelerating.

Parallel to the rescue centres, sanctuaries and rehoming organisations survey, NEWC also launched a survey to gauge the impact of rising costs on equine owners and keepers. The results of that survey will also be used to understand the complex challenges facing the sector.

As with the 2023 report, NEWC intends to share the results with governments and political representatives in the UK, including new Members of Parliament following the General Election, and relevant authorities, to highlight the challenges facing the sector and provide evidence for recommendations and actions.

Additionally, NEWC is continuously assessing the available educational material to identify and develop new resources to support the equine welfare sector, including ways of encouraging owners and keepers to seek timely advice and to make responsible decisions for their equines. NEWC also provides member organisations with opportunities to share challenges and ideas through various collaborative efforts and working groups, recognising that the stability and efficacy of equine welfare organisations is critical for the sector.





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Contributors



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