

## Background

A growing body of research exists that investigates RT incorporating equines with various populations (McKissock et al., 2022). With the exception of two thesis, there is a gap in the research on how CTRS® incorporate equines in practice. Woods et al. (2021) published a consensus statement on Equine Assisted Services (EAS) that did not include RT. The ATRA Competencies study found a high rate of animal-assisted therapy use (ATRA, 2019), but type of animal was not identified. ATRA EAS task force recommended research on the frequency, modes, and ways that CTRS incorporate equines in practice. This research is significant because the VA funding for “equine therapy for mental health” has created discussion about which disciplines are appropriate to provide these services. This research is timely, as organizations who deliver specialized training have traditionally limited access to CTRS who desire specialized training (EGALA, AHA).

## Research Question

The following question was examined in this study: What is the role of CTRS® incorporating equines to benefit humans and how does it relate to other therapies?

## Methods

A group of subject matter experts in EAS reviewed and pre-tested the survey. Questions were broken down into groundwork, mounted work, carriage driving, and adaptive vaulting. The Qualtrics link was sent through NCTRC to all certificants. Prior to beginning the survey, the participants read and agreed to informed consent. Over 19000 CTRS® received the survey, 422 opened the survey, and 291 completed the survey. Descriptive analysis was then performed on the data using Qualtrics..



## Participants

A survey was sent to over 19000 CTRS through NCTRC. 422 opened the survey and 291 completed the survey.

## Measures

Categories of questions regarding groundwork, mounted work, and carriage driving:

- Within each category, questions regarding session length, implementation frequency, ages, group size, population, and funding

Practice:

- Questions of goals, assessment, facilitation, trainings/qualifications, and safety concerns.



## Procedures

An anonymous survey was sent out with one reminder. No incentives were offered.. Two equine specialists met with research team to help generate the set of guidelines for practice based on findings from the study.

## Results

With a response rate of n=291, about 49.14% report that they incorporate equines into practice. Of those who incorporate mounted work, in Figure 1, 30.95% use therapeutic riding, 17.3% report adaptive riding, 19.34% do individual goal-sessions. In Figure 2, 48% report a focus on the physical domain. In mounted work, the primary diagnosis is mental health (19%), physical disability (19%), developmental disability (18%), neurological impairment (26.5%), and sensory impairment (13.85%).

In Figure 3 on groundwork, 27.69% use equine assisted learning, 10.77% leadership, 22.56% personal development, 12.82% mental health, and 6% transition. On domains, Figure 4, 58.18% report emotional while 21.82% report cognitive. For groundwork populations: 24.83% mental health, 16.11% physical disabilities, 15.44% developmental disabilities, 23% neurological impairments. If not using equines, 29% report not enough training.

## Figures

Figure 1 Types of 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...

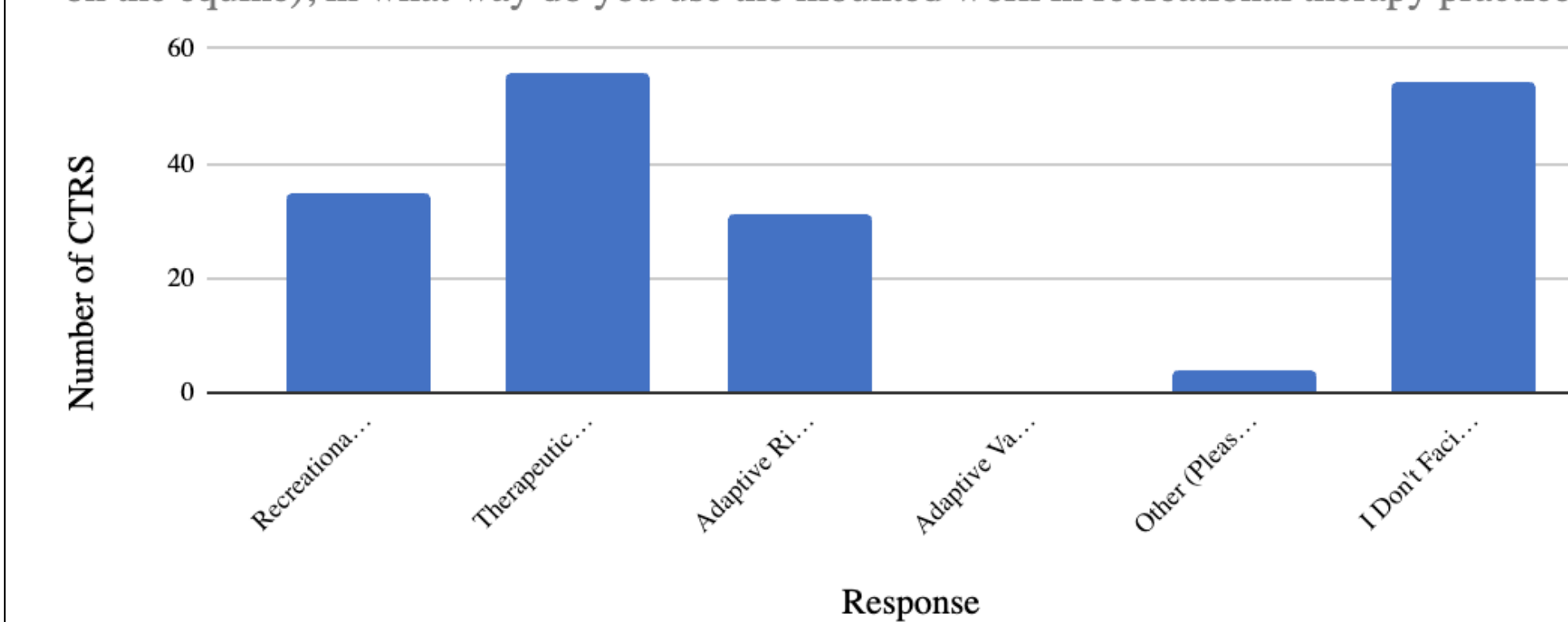


Figure 2 Domains of Mounted Work

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

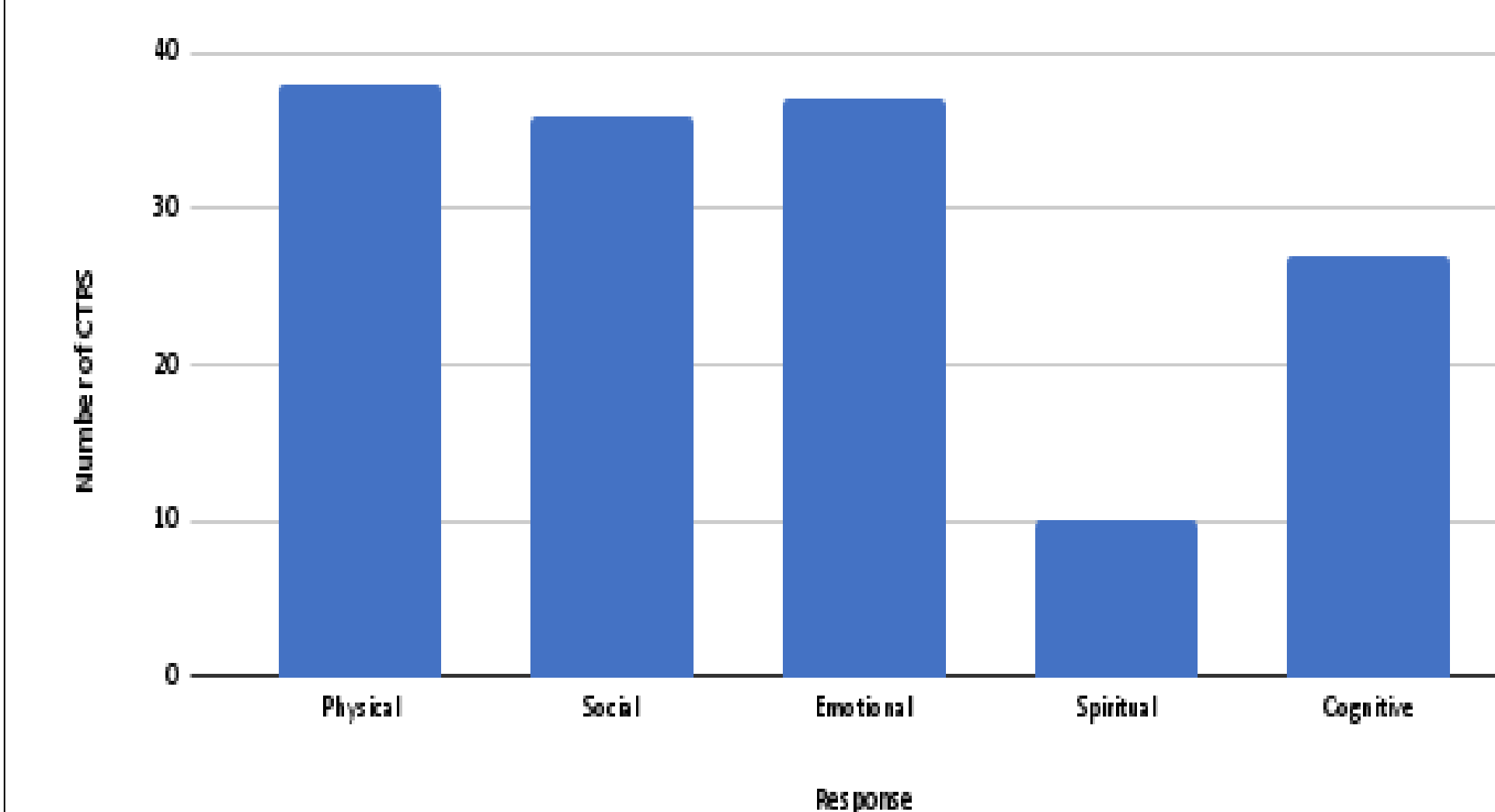


Figure 3 Types of Groundwork

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)

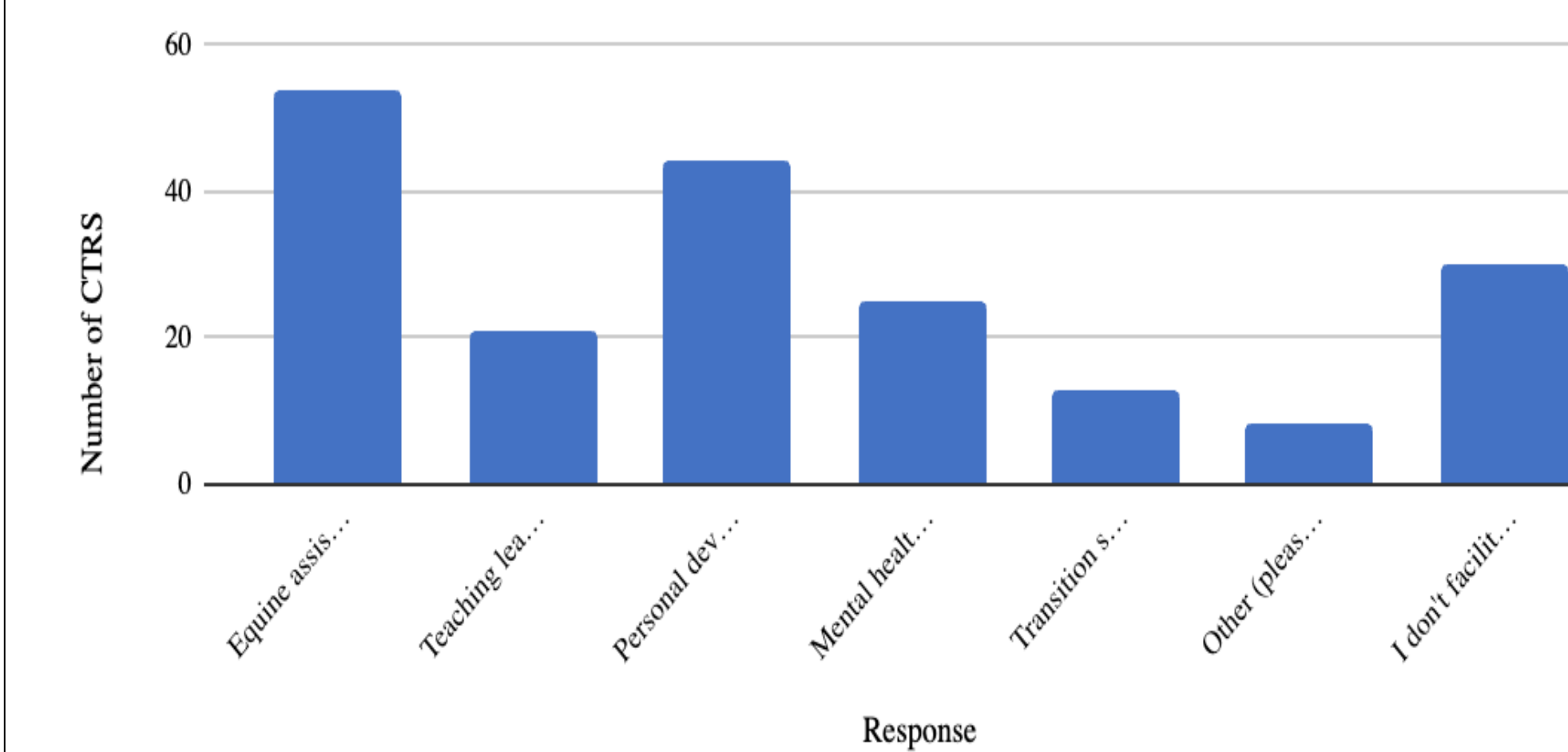
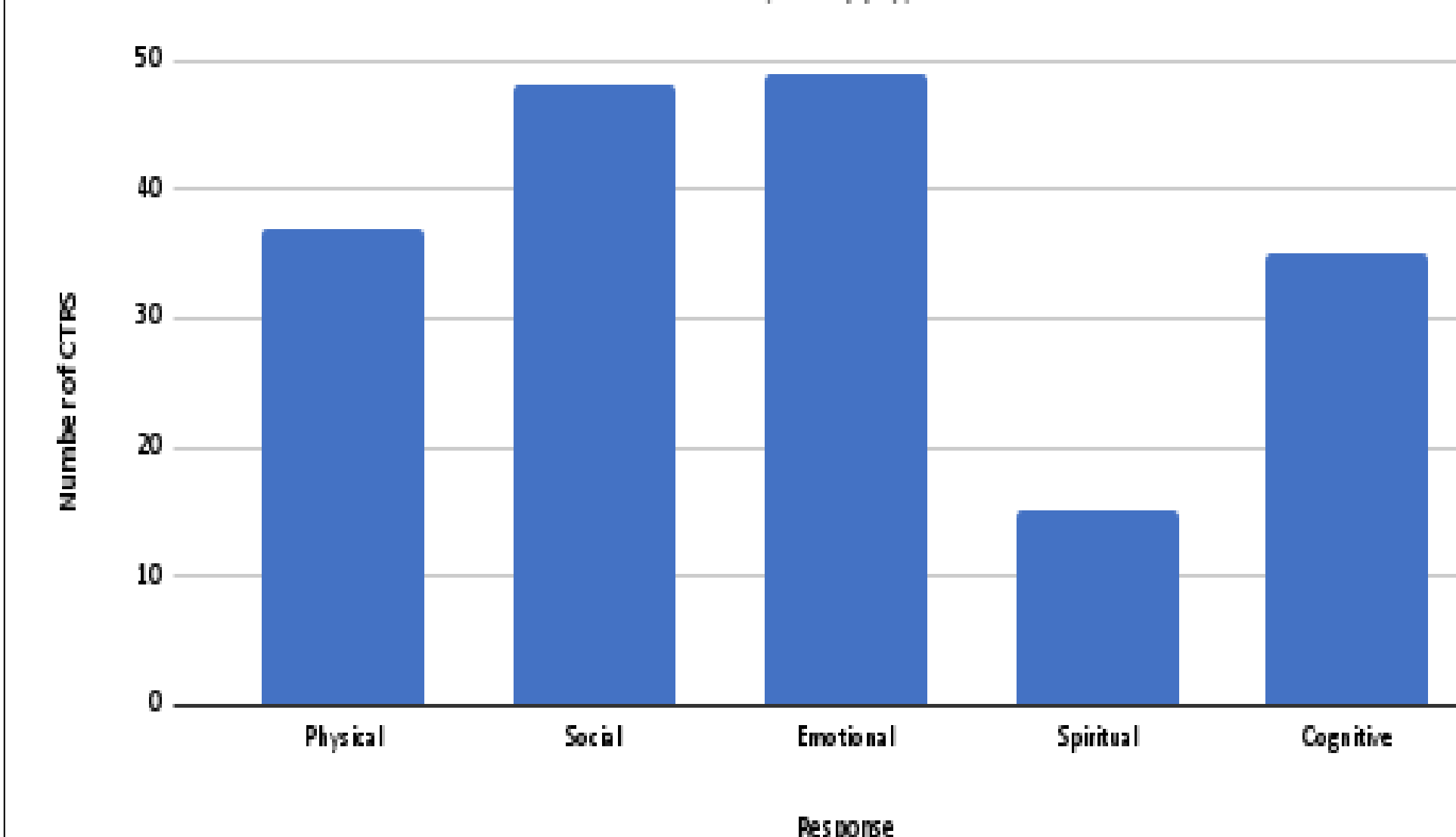


Figure 4 Domains of Groundwork

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



## Discussion

Primarily, mounted work is focusing on physical goals while groundwork is focusing on emotional goals. CTRS® are typically doing one session once a week for one hour. More than 50% are co-facilitating with equine specialist, but very few are co-treating with other therapies. More than 70% of CTRS® are working with adults 18-75 years old. More than 70% are working in groups of 2-7. As a result of the survey results, guidelines were developed with part one addressing the community partnership (e.g. setting up MOU, orientation, roles, and safety). Part two focuses on the APIE process. Specific screening and assessment procedures are suggested. Goals and objectives are included related to community-based improvements. Mounted and groundwork modalities with varying facilitation techniques were discussed as well as evaluation of goals, objectives, and overall outcomes.

## Implications for Practice

By better understanding how CTRS® incorporate equines in practice and incorporating the new RT EAS guidelines, there may be more opportunities for targeted professional development through ATRA and the use of this modality in the future. Greater awareness of RT incorporating equines as a therapy may provide more collaborative opportunities to gain specialized training from other equine-organizations.

## References

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