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## An Exploration of the Lifestyle of Rodeo Athletes

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# An Exploration of the Lifestyle of Rodeo Athletes

Brooke Tunnell OTS; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L; & Becki Cohill, OTD, OTR/L

## BACKGROUND

- Rodeo is rapidly growing and consists of highly talented, tough athletes (Haney & Pearson, 1999).
- There is a gap in the research that examines the occupation of rodeo.
- Occupational science, the study of human occupation, focuses on how the form, function, and meaning of daily activities influence health and well-being (Larson & Zemke, 2003).
- This study examined the form, function, and meaning of rodeo and the lifestyle of rodeo athletes & explored the volitional aspects of the sport, the environment, and the roles, rituals, routines, and habits prevalent with rodeo participation.

## PURPOSE

To develop an enhanced understanding of the occupation of rodeo by exploring the lifestyle of rodeo athletes. To contribute to the body of research, identify the populations' occupational needs, and support the future of OT addressing this population.

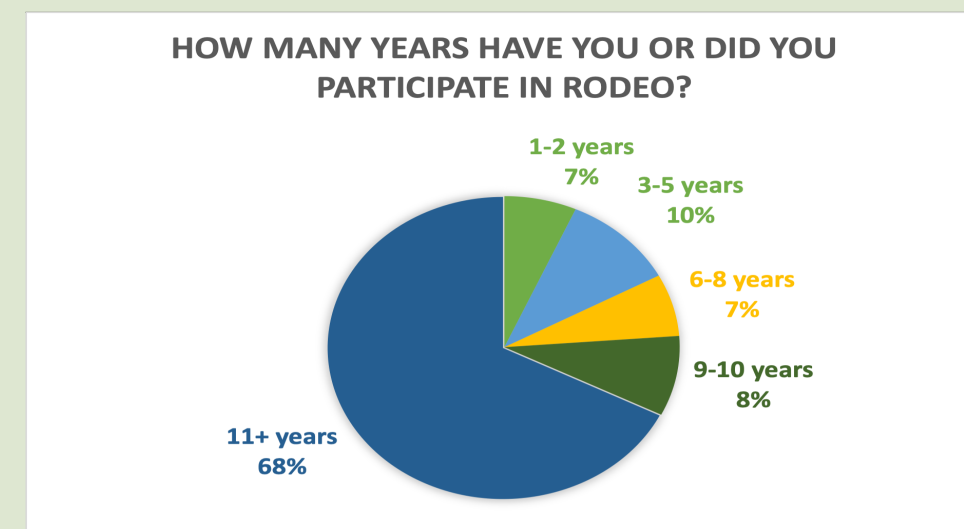
## METHODS

- Mixed-methods research design**
- Survey participants** (n=105) recruited from social media postings, personal connections, and snowball sampling.
- Interviewed participants:** (n=6) via zoom and in-person for ~45 minutes.
- Narrative prompt participants:** (n=5) answered open-ended, interview questions through written communication.
- Photo Elicitation participants** (n=3) given the prompt: Please upload a photo of what rodeo means to you.
- Observations** conducted by student researcher at various rodeo events.
- Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by student researcher; data organized and coded in Dedoose.
- Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis utilized: 3 themes identified.

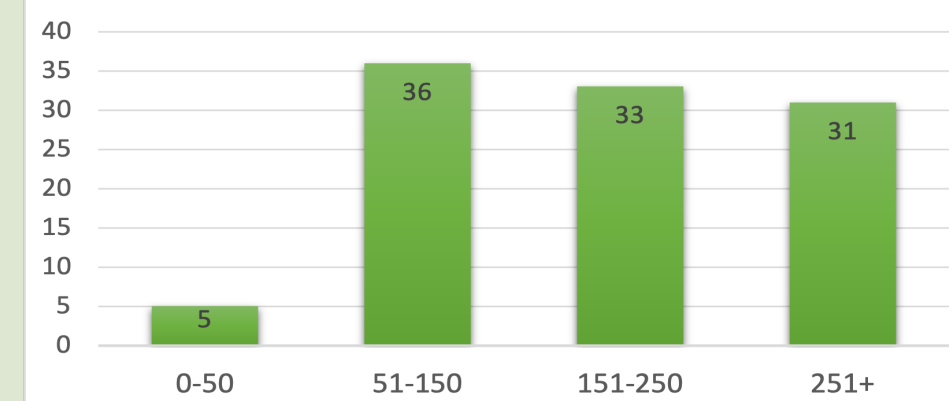
## RESULTS

**Theme 1:**  
Rodeo Lifestyle-  
"Eat, Breathe, Sleep Rodeo"

### Survey Results



HOW MANY MILES DO YOU TYPICALLY DRIVE TO A RODEO?



### Qualitative Results

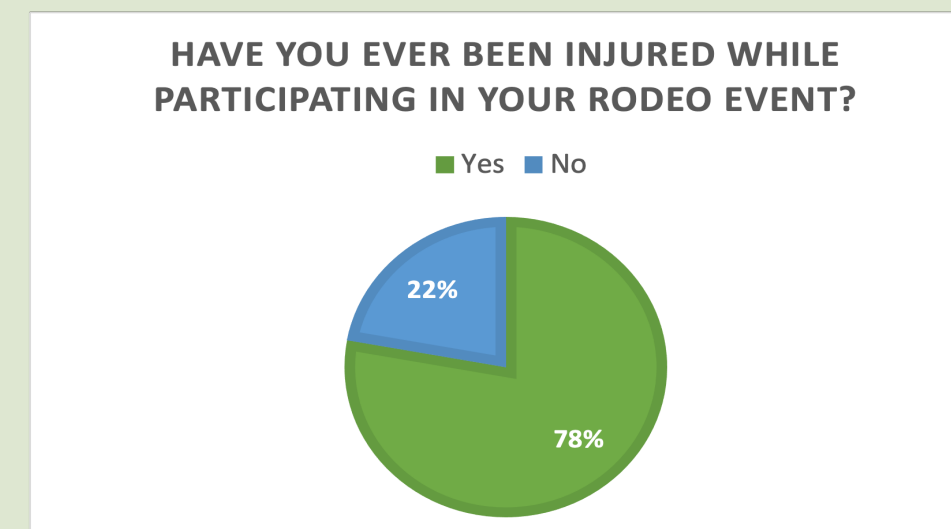
- "...if you're going to be a true competitor you dedicate, your life is rodeo"
- "Busy! It seems like life is always super busy, home from one rodeo just to pack for the next, practice and make sure the horses are ready"
- "You lived your life 24/7 365 days, so I mean it was a big commitment you know, not only just for me but for my family"

### Photo Elicitation

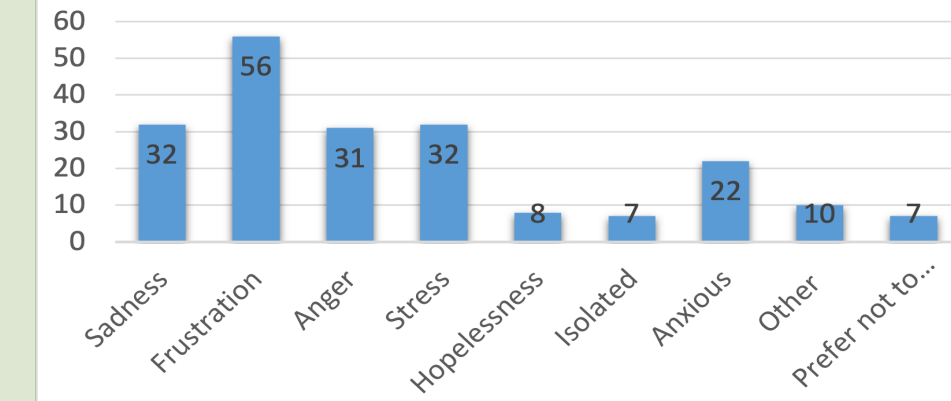


**Theme 2:**  
Effects on Health  
Subthemes- Physical Effects & Mental Effects

### Survey Results



DID THE INJURY CAUSE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING EMOTIONAL REACTIONS?



### Qualitative Results

- "Although I end up with a lot more bruises and cuts than most people who aren't part of this industry, it has been huge in keeping me both physically and mentally fit and healthy"
- "This really helps me stay sane! So its helps my mental well-being, and does help me physically since I do have to workout and even if I miss a workout for myself it's a workout to work my horses"

#### Sub-theme: Physical Effects

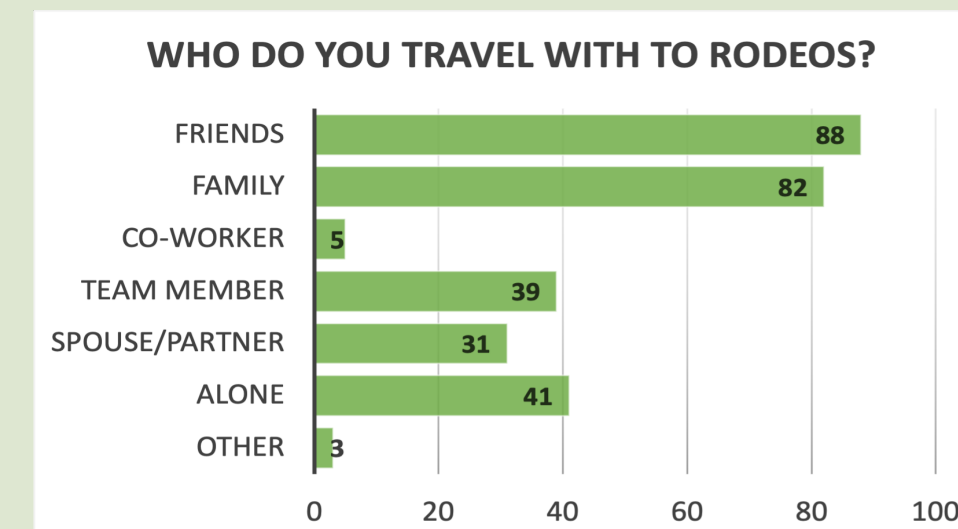
- "That's the only reason I quit riding bulls was cause my body wouldn't keep up with what I was trying to put it through"

#### Sub-theme: Mental Effects

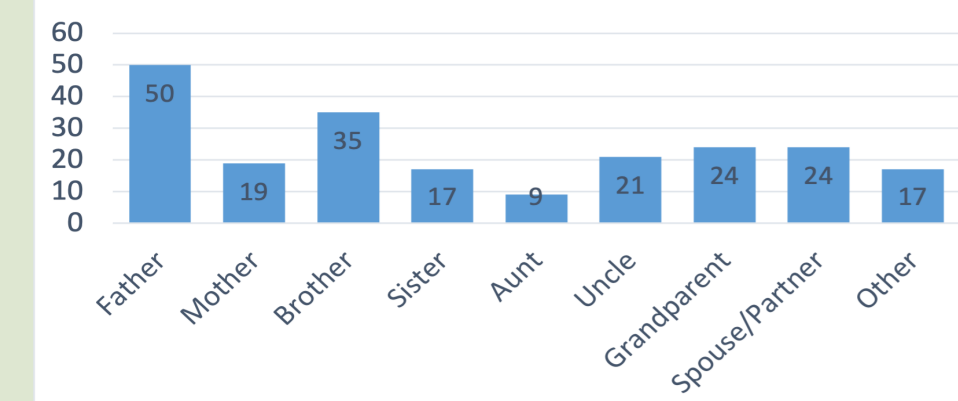
- "I was just frustrated, and I told my dad I was like I'm at a point now where I'm either going to quit, if I don't win, if I don't have a good summer, I'm quitin' I felt like I was treading water"

**Theme 3:**  
Rodeo Community-  
One Big Family

### Survey Results



DID OR DO ANY OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN RODEO?



### Qualitative Results

- "It's a very tight knit community, I mean for the most part everyone helps everyone"
- "Rodeo to me means community. It's always been a way to spend time with family, and no matter where out travel to there's great people at the rodeos"
- "You start building that friendship and I mean it's kinda a unique environment really, if you don't know 'em, you learn 'em, you get to know 'em pretty quick."

### Photo Elicitation



## CULTURAL EMERSION

- Observations were made by the student researcher at various rodeos throughout the duration of the project.
- Routines:** Contestants and Flow of Rodeo
- Environment:** Weather, Location, Smells
- Social:** Crowds, Families, Community
- Virtual:** Televised, On the News

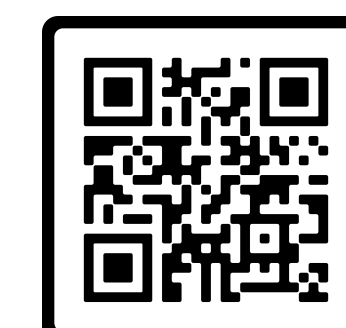
## DISCUSSION

- Rodeo is a lifestyle.
- Rodeo athletes engage in rodeo despite any disruption in occupational balance and life management.
- Injuries may hinder occupational engagement.
- The effects rodeo has on health either increase or decrease occupational participation.
- Rodeo participation requires social engagement; it is a very tight-knit community that shares a valued occupation and lifestyle.
- This study enhances the knowledge of the occupation of rodeo and informs the occupational therapy profession.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR OT

- Importance of cultural responsiveness & knowledge of rodeo culture.
- Importance of impact on health: balancing positive and negative effects.
- Importance of community.
- Work directly with rodeo athletes by:
- Supporting injury management, modifying and adapting activities, addressing post-concussion treatment, mental health awareness, and transitions out of rodeo into another meaningful occupations.

### Deliverable



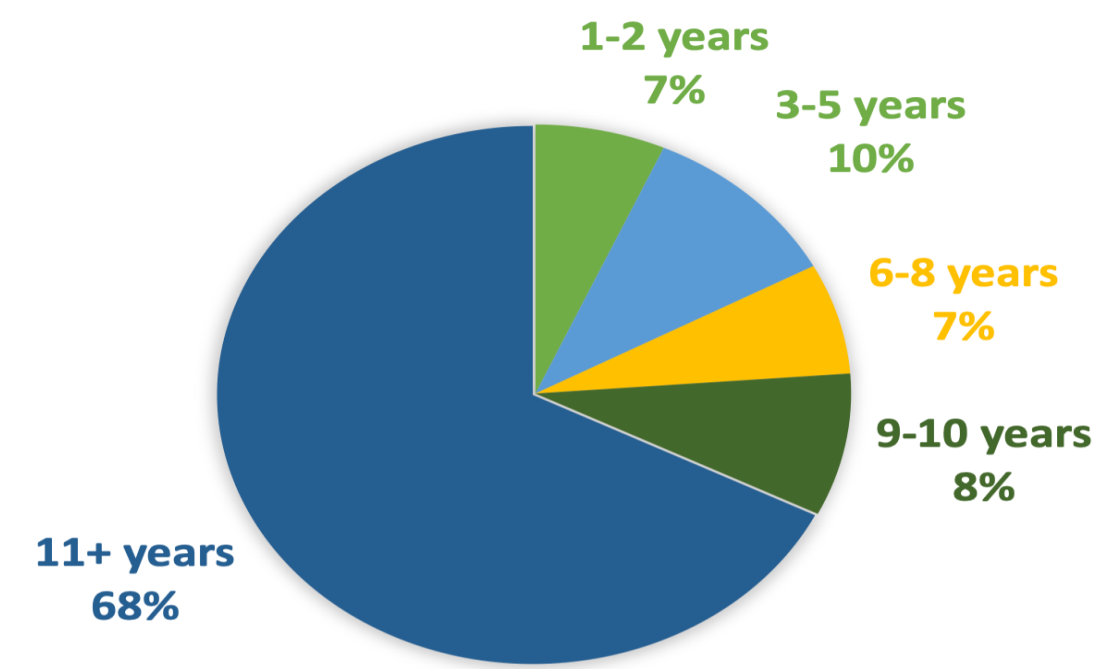
### References



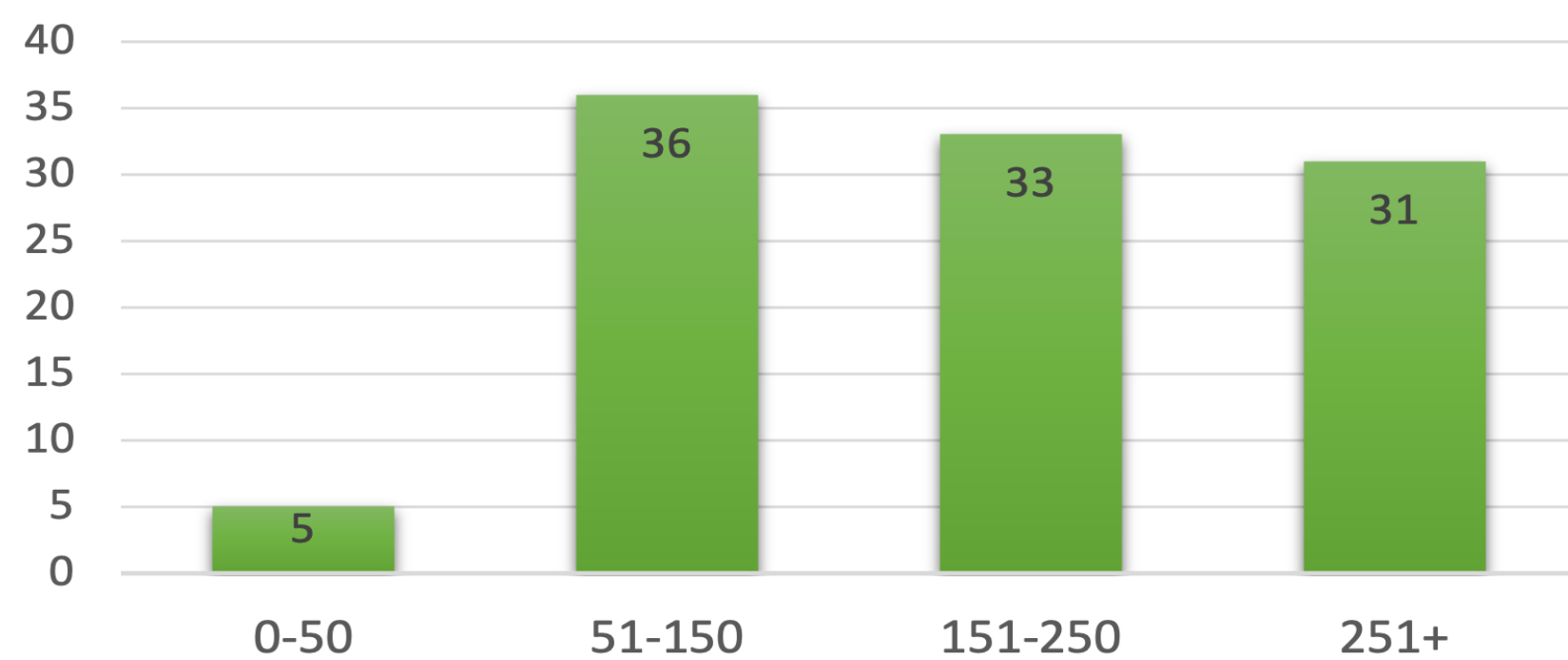
**Theme 1:**

Rodeo Lifestyle-  
"Eat, Breathe, Sleep Rodeo"

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU OR DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN RODEO?



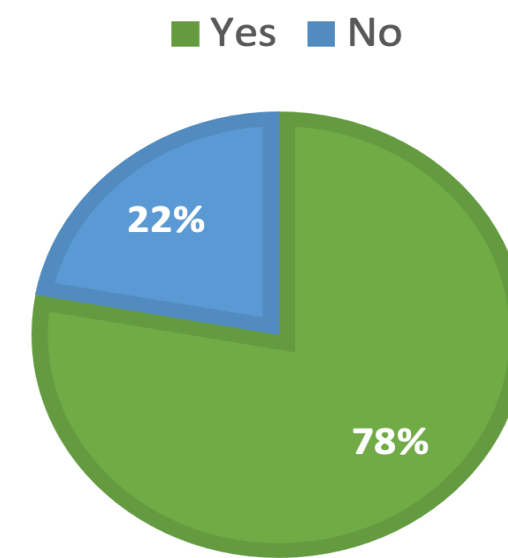
HOW MANY MILES DO YOU TYPICALLY DRIVE TO A RODEO?



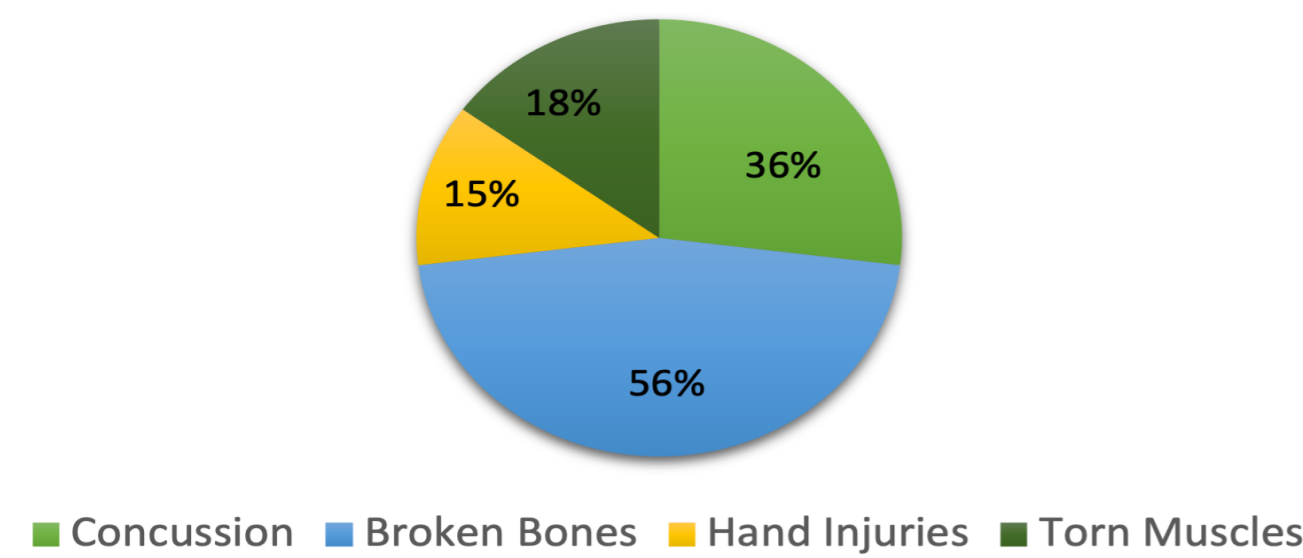
**Theme 2:**

Effects on Health  
Subthemes: Physical Effects & Mental Effects

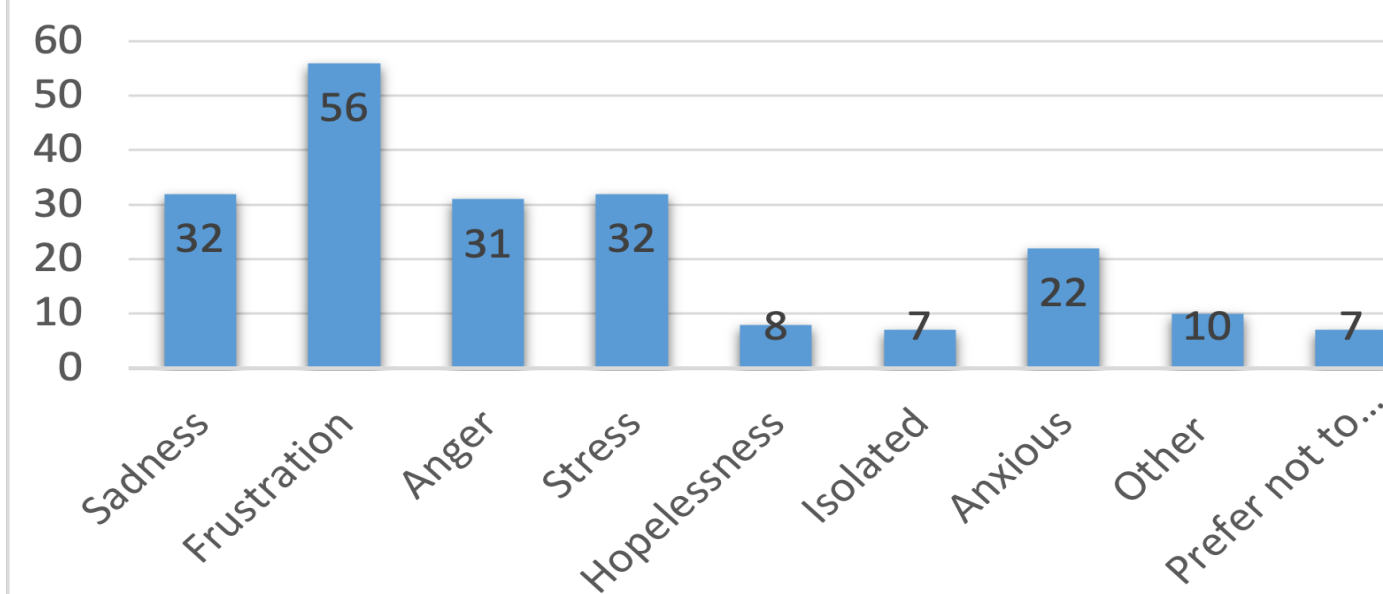
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN INJURED WHILE PARTICIPATING IN YOUR RODEO EVENT?



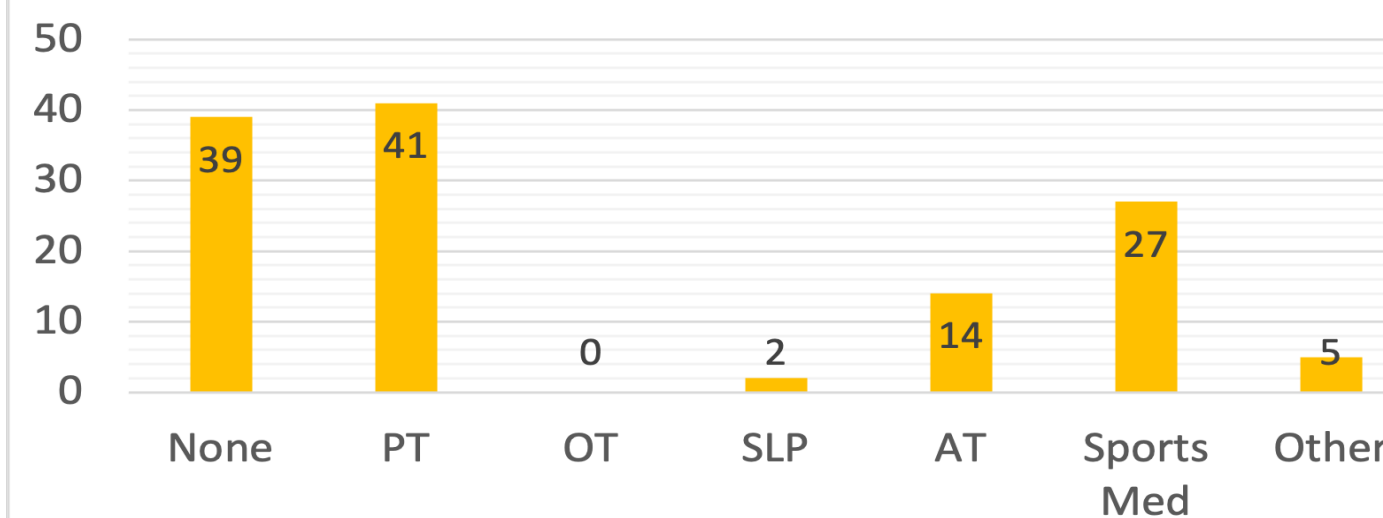
COMMON INJURIES STATED BY PARTICIPANTS



DID THE INJURY CAUSE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING EMOTIONAL REACTIONS?



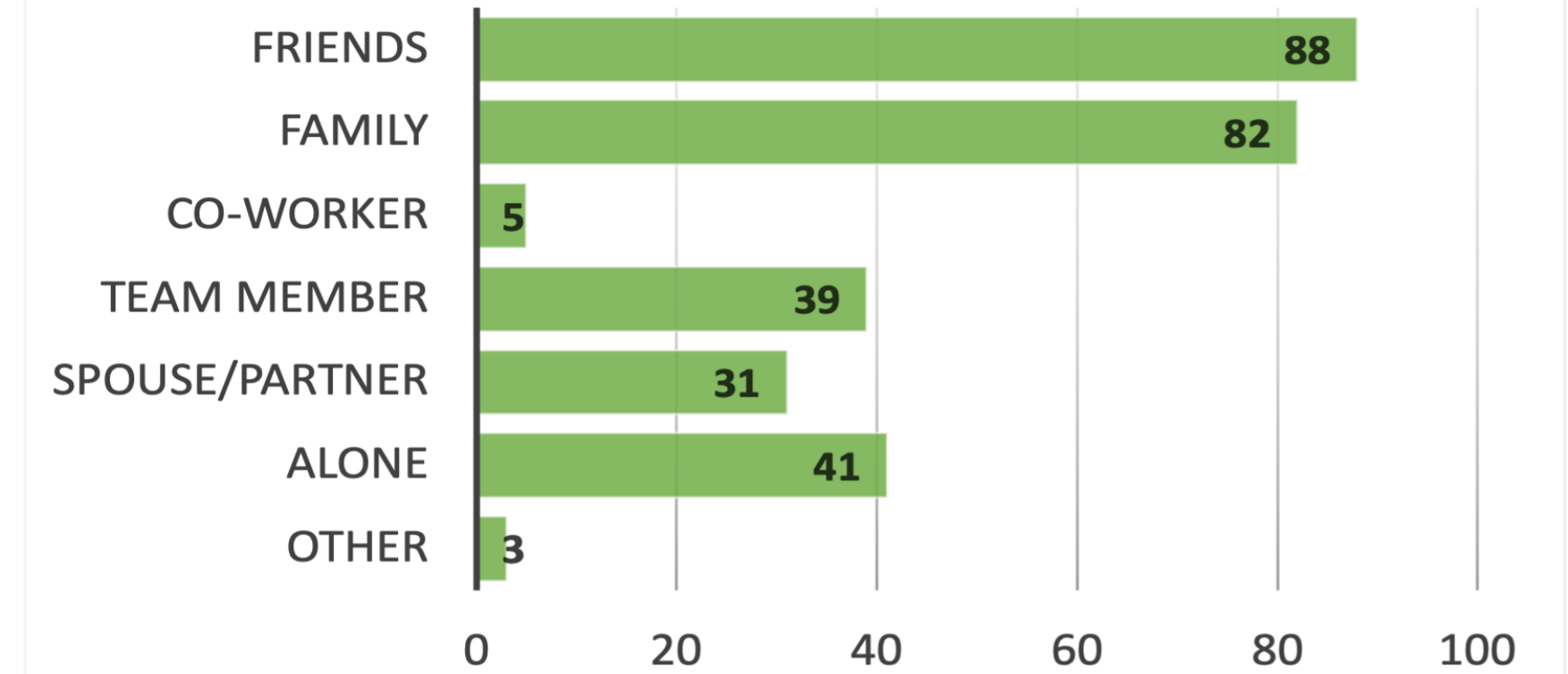
DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN REHABILITATION AFTER YOUR INJURY? IF YES, SPECIFY WHAT KIND OF REHABILITATION YOU HAD.



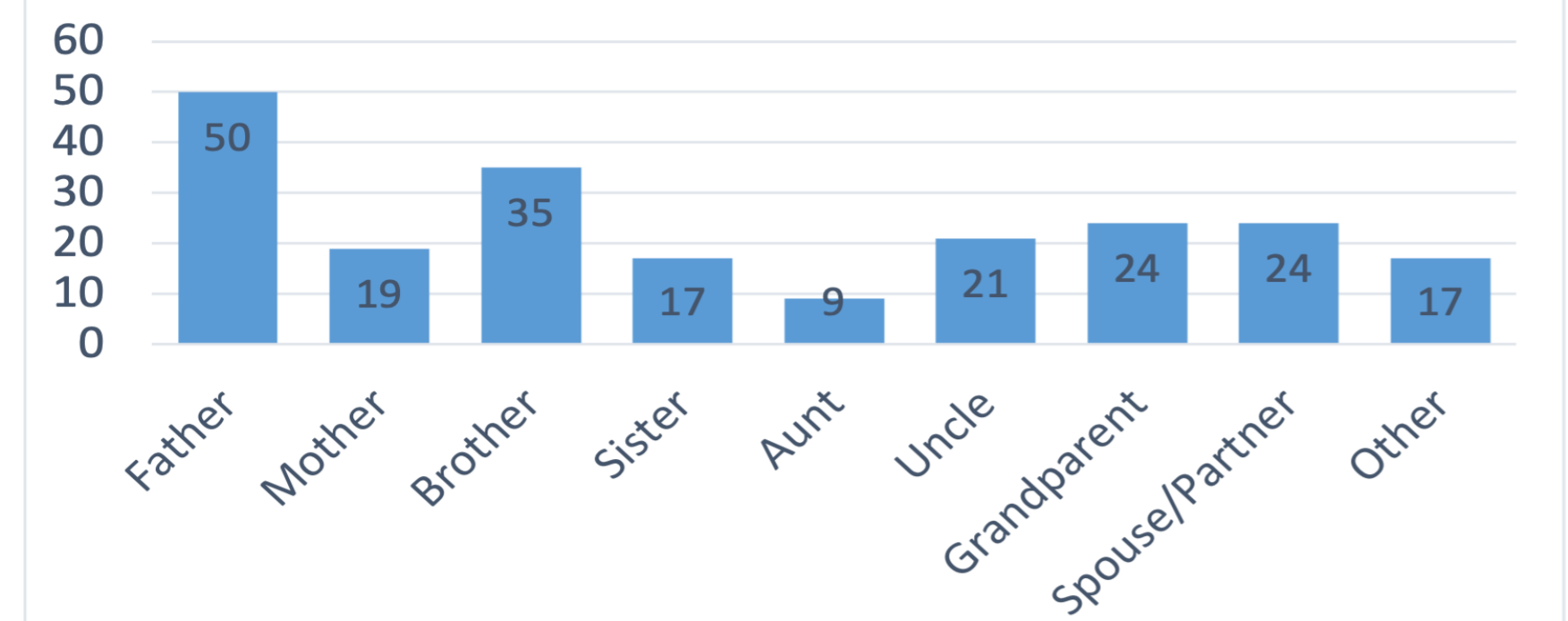
**Theme 3:**

Rodeo Community-  
One Big Family

WHO DO YOU TRAVEL WITH TO RODEOS?



DID OR DO ANY OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN RODEO?





*The photo I uploaded is of my dad, two of my brothers, and myself after a ranch rodeo that (if I remember right) we took third in. It depicts what rodeo means to me because when I think of rodeo it's about my family, goofin [sic] off, but competing to win, and having a good time even if you don't win! Plus it's alllllll [sic] about those awesome horses that put up with our shenanigans.*



*I chose this photo because this was the first roping me and one of my lifelong friends entered and we won a saddle. I have always enjoyed roping with my family and close friends. This photo also means a lot to me because in 2009 my uncle took me to this same arena for a roping and I win my very first saddle ever there and in 2014 he passed way. The above photo was taken in 2021. This was the first time I had ever been back to that arena since my uncle passed away!*



As a mother, this is what rodeo means. My son winning the Best Of the Best this weekend. I like the fact he loves the western life as much as I do. It amazes me that he has done so well and the opportunities the youth have is way beyond any that I was able to do. Hope this helps.