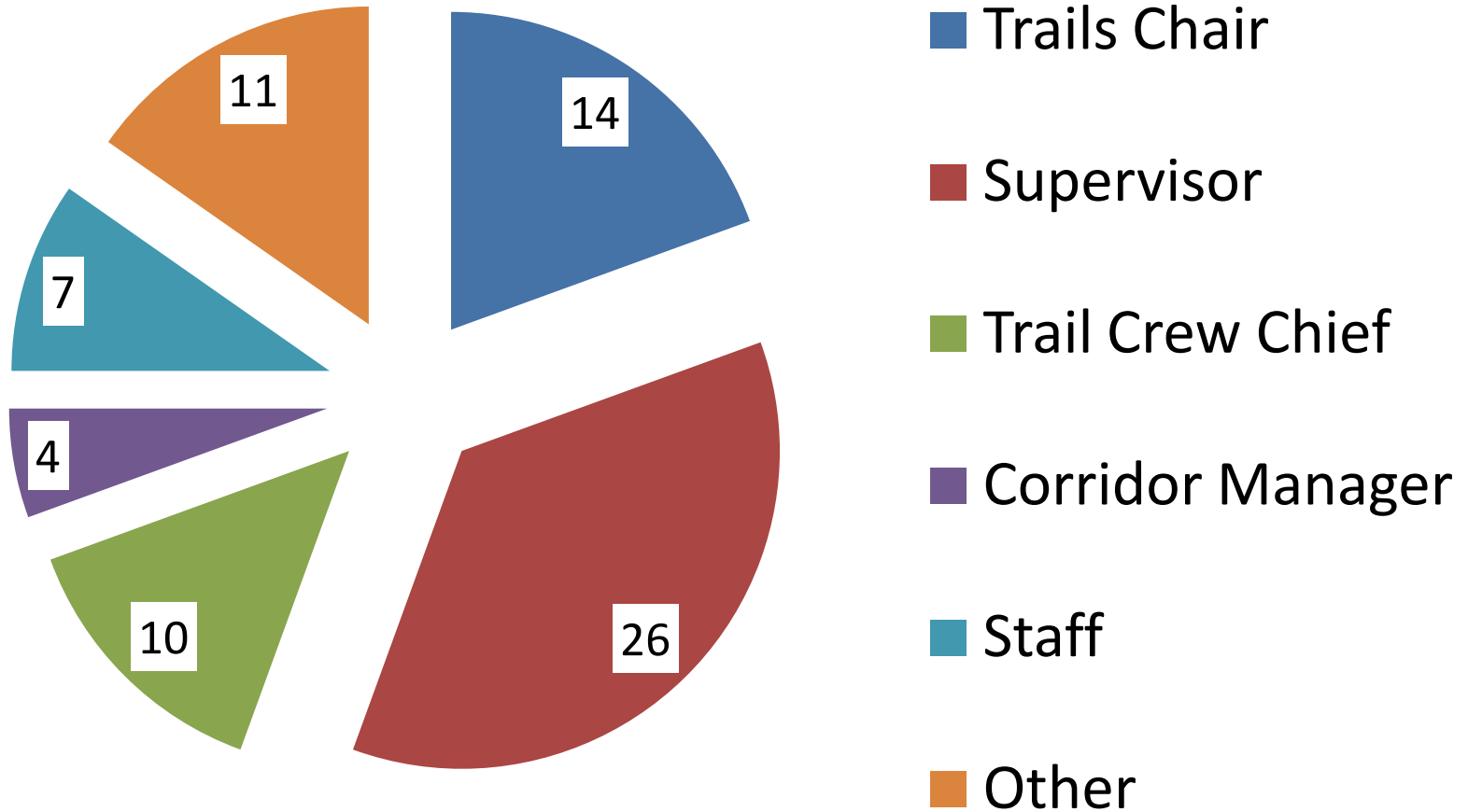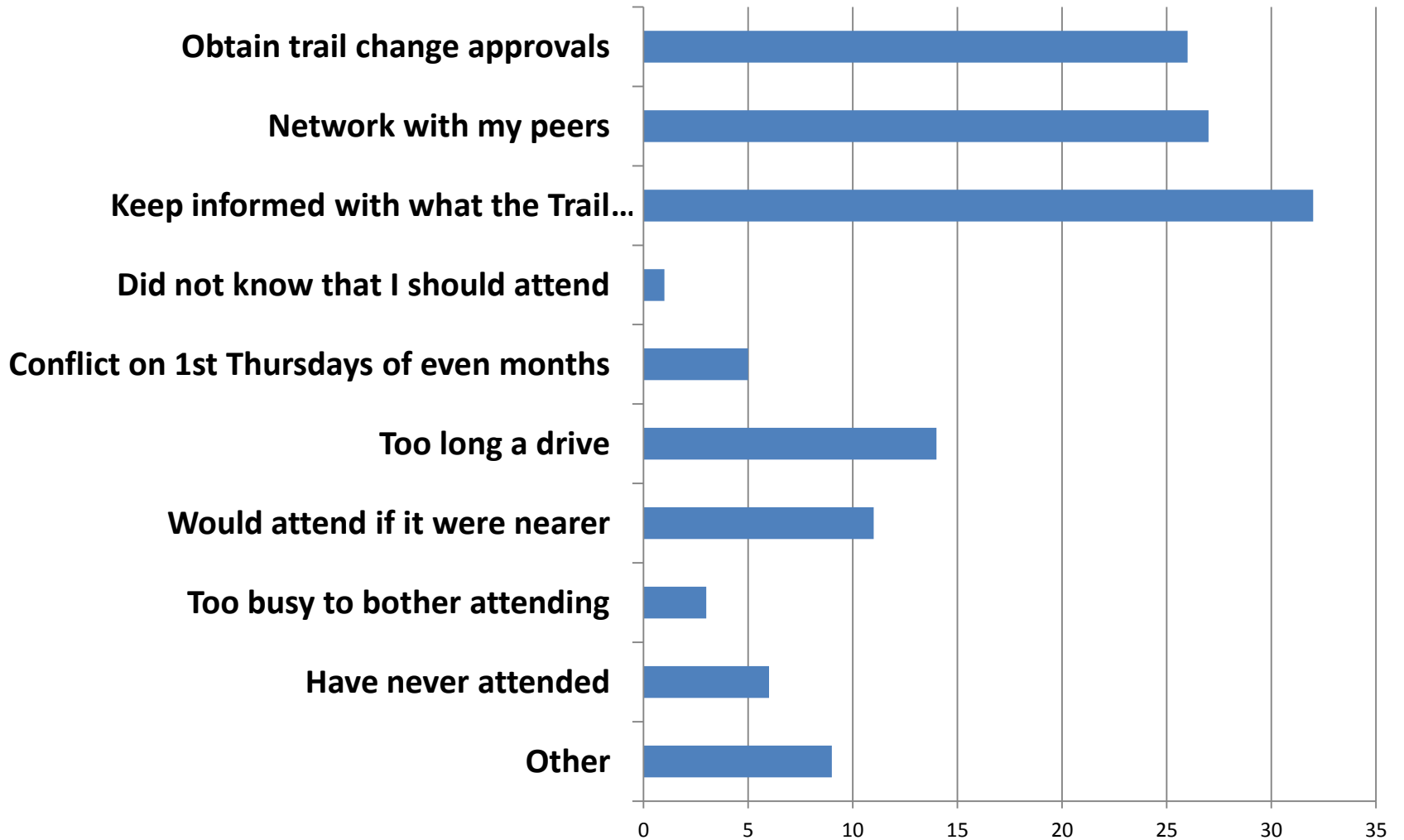# Trail Leadership Survey Summary

September, 2013

# Current Role at the TC

# Reasons for Attending Trails Council

# Comments about Trails Council

- Meetings allow me to interface with staff, mostly the PC's
- Too much of the meetings are not relevant to me
  - Vote on trail approvals in parks that I have never heard of.
- Discussions drag on unnecessarily

# How frequent should meetings of PC and volunteer leaders be?
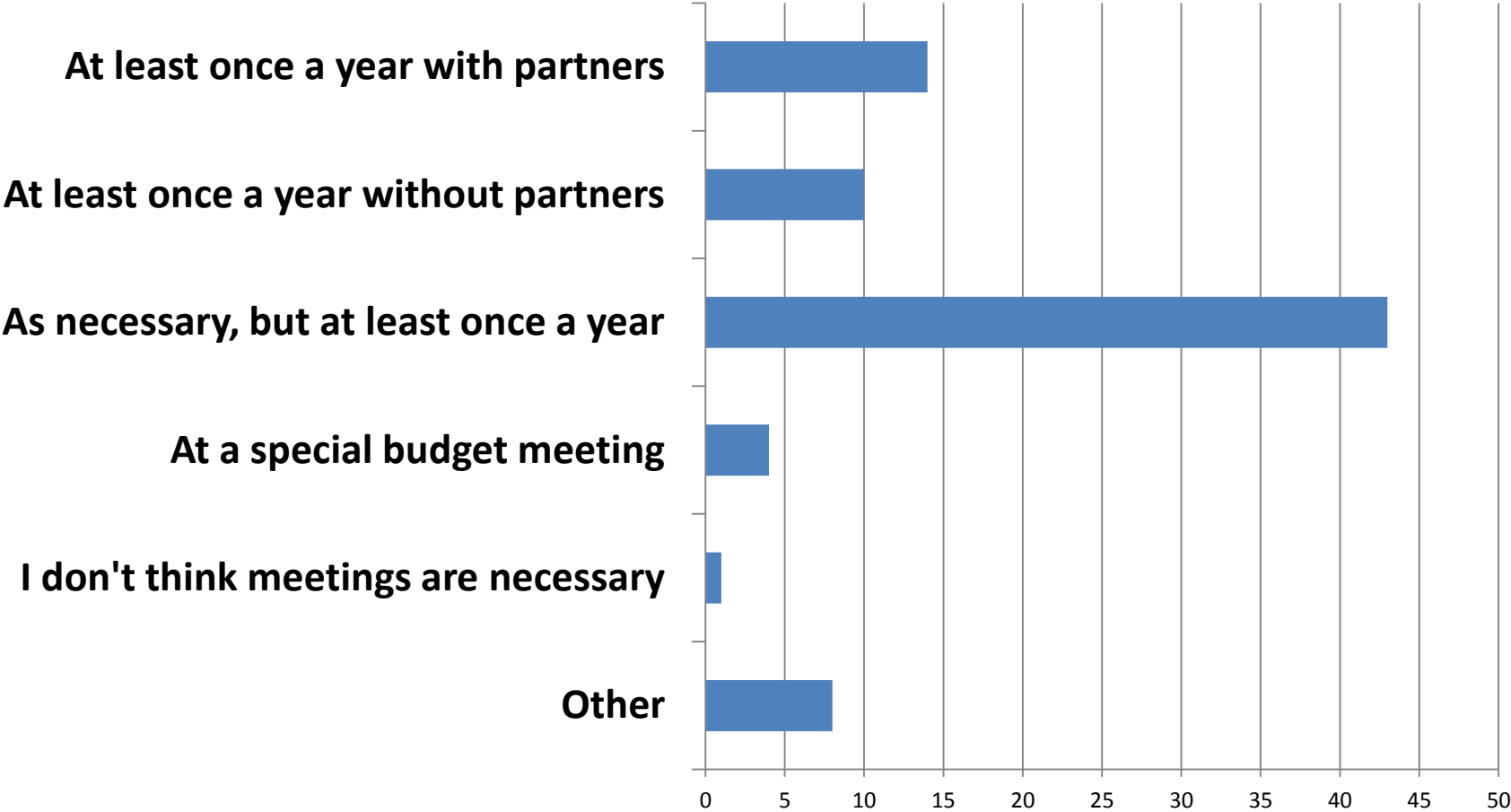
# Causes of Breakdowns in Communication
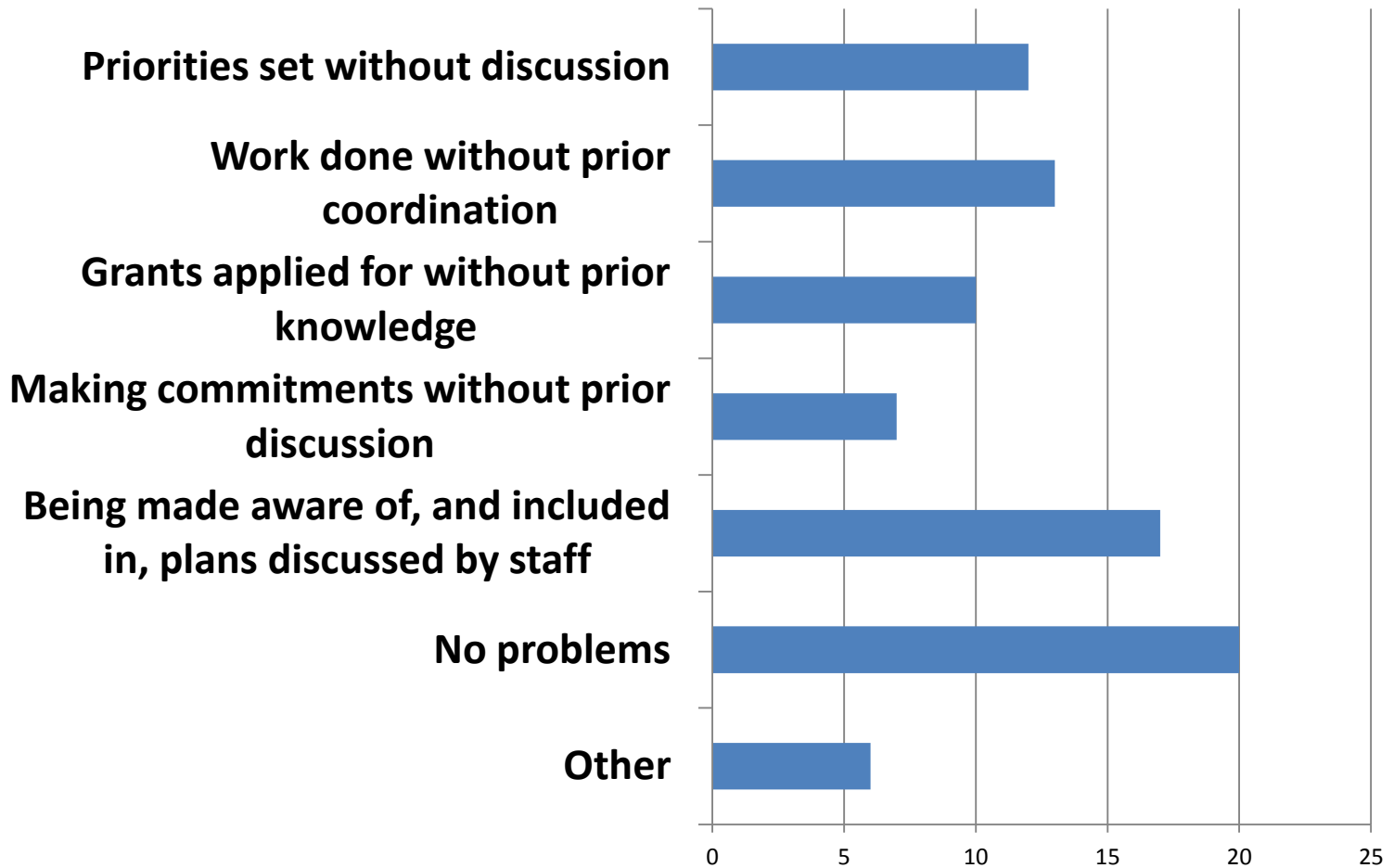
# Comments about Communications

- Lack of response or follow-up including feedback on reports

- Not aware of projects or volunteer needs until afterwards

- Lack of coordination between chairs and PCs on projects

- Little need to communicate with staff, but when I do they are responsive and helpful.

- Volunteer to volunteer communication problems exist.

- Not aware what the NJ PC did for the Trail Conference

# Preferred ways chairs and supervisors communicate with:
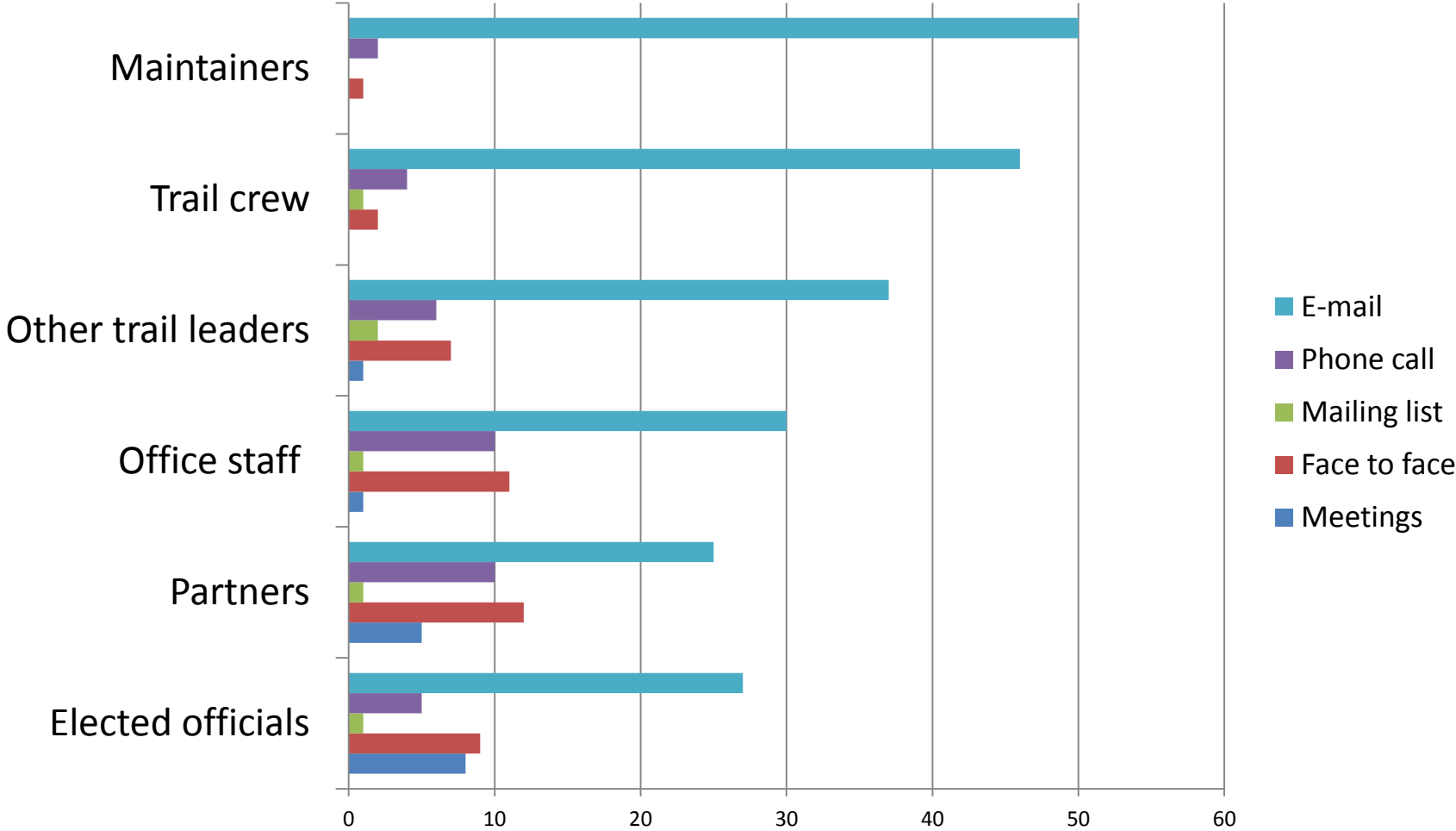
# Problems with Reporting

- PDF forms don't work reliably (mostly Apple)
- There are problems getting reports on time at all levels
- Need a better reporting system for sawyers
- Improve the system of how the location of downed trees is reported
- Reports are collected, but not recorded in the data base or referenced

# Problems with Reporting

- Maintainers don't understand how to compute the hours
- Some people have to submit reports to multiple people
- One chair requires a non-standard report form
- The reporting calendar aligns poorly with the working season.
- I have zero training in reporting.

# Reporting Solutions

- All reporting should be available on line

- Required summaries for supervisor and chair should be done automatically on line

- An allowance to override summaries and/or update by supervisors/chair.

# Supervisor Maintainer Summaries
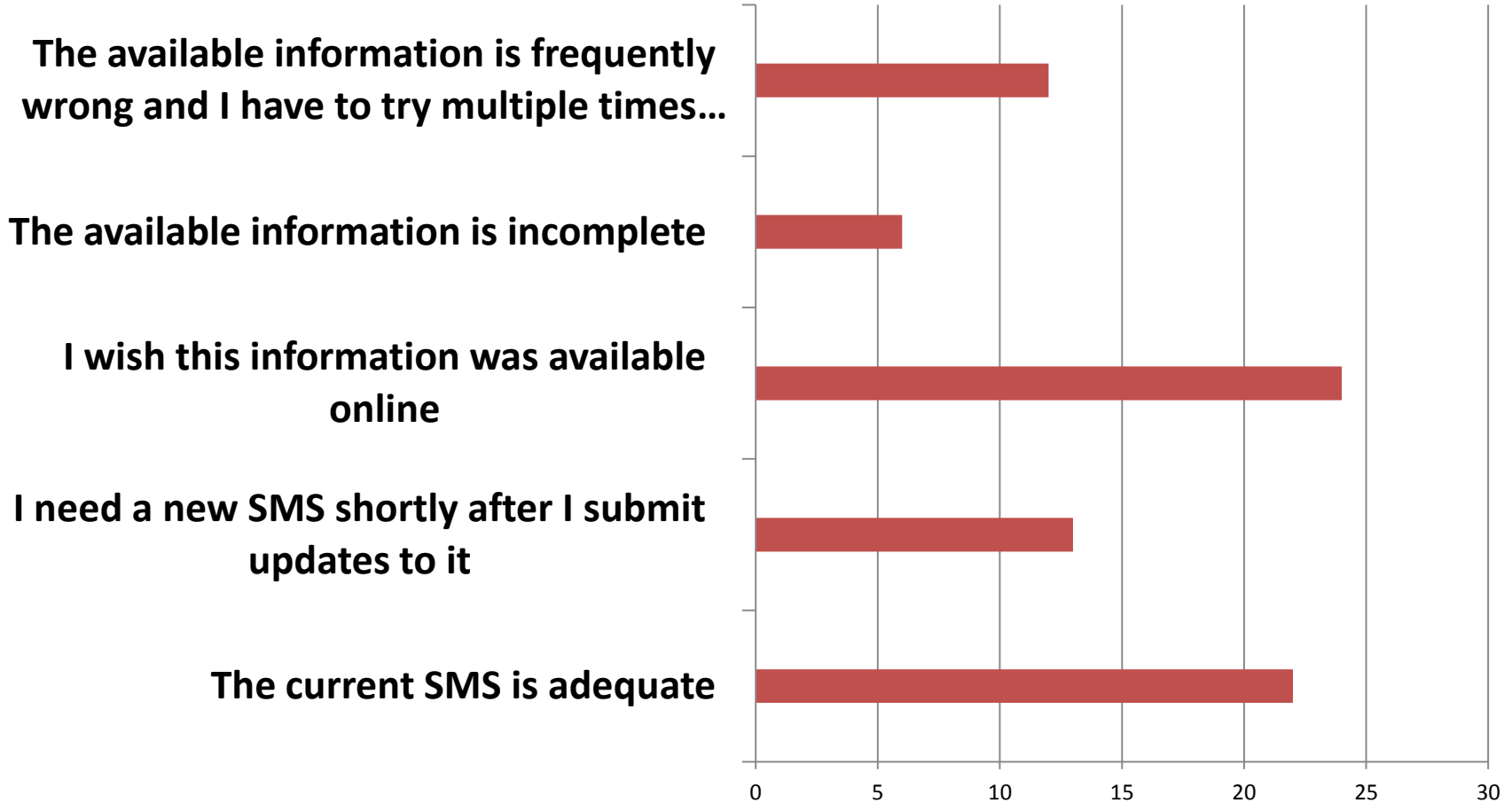
# SMS Comments

- Filling in the SMS is a pain – After keeping track of the statistics on a spreadsheet, I have to transfer the information to the SMS. If it were online, then it would only have to be entered.

- Is this a training issue or nonsense as the hours information is discarded

Chairs and Supervisors Responsibilities Comfort Level
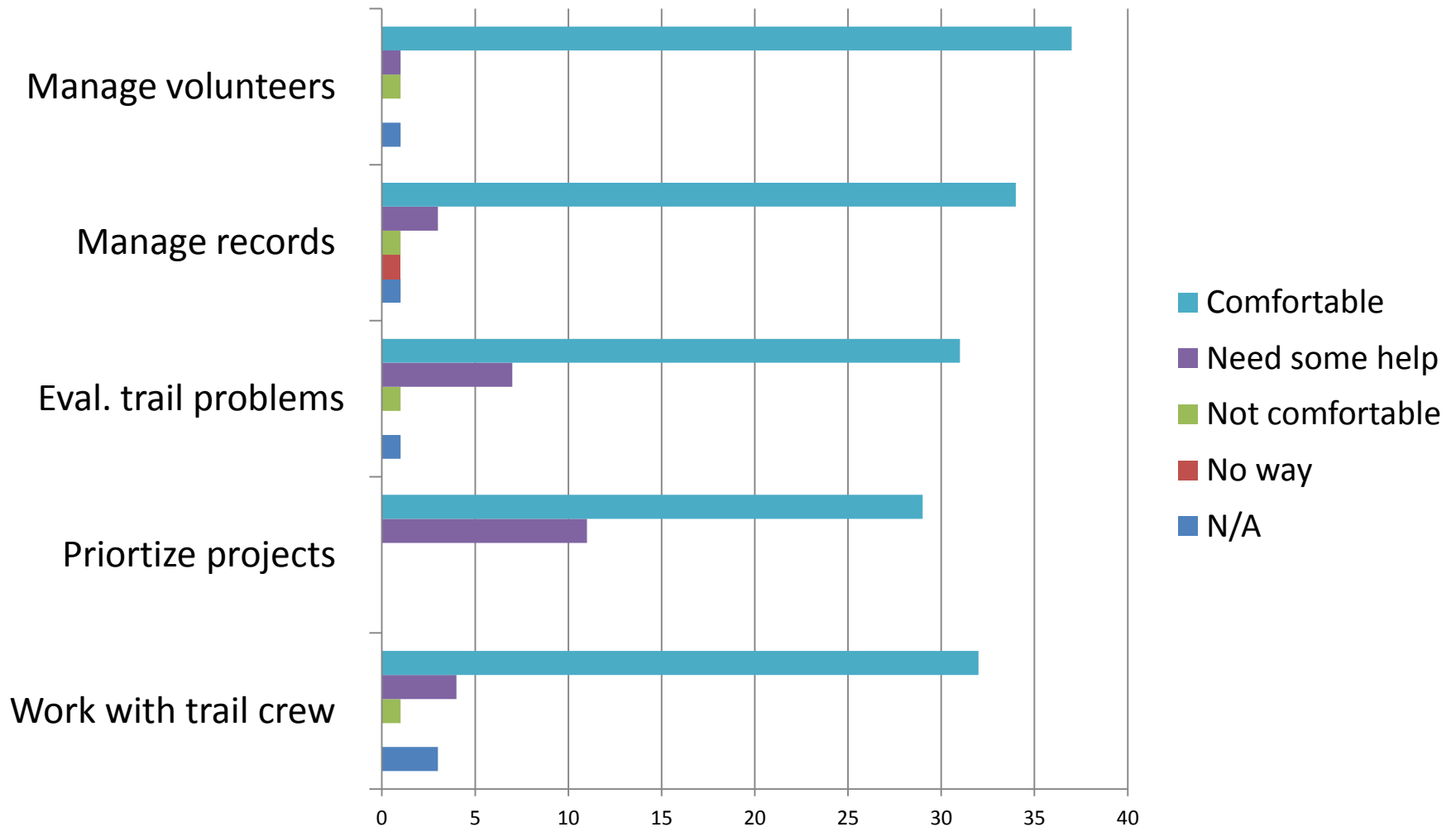
# Chairs and Supervisors Responsibilities Comfort Level
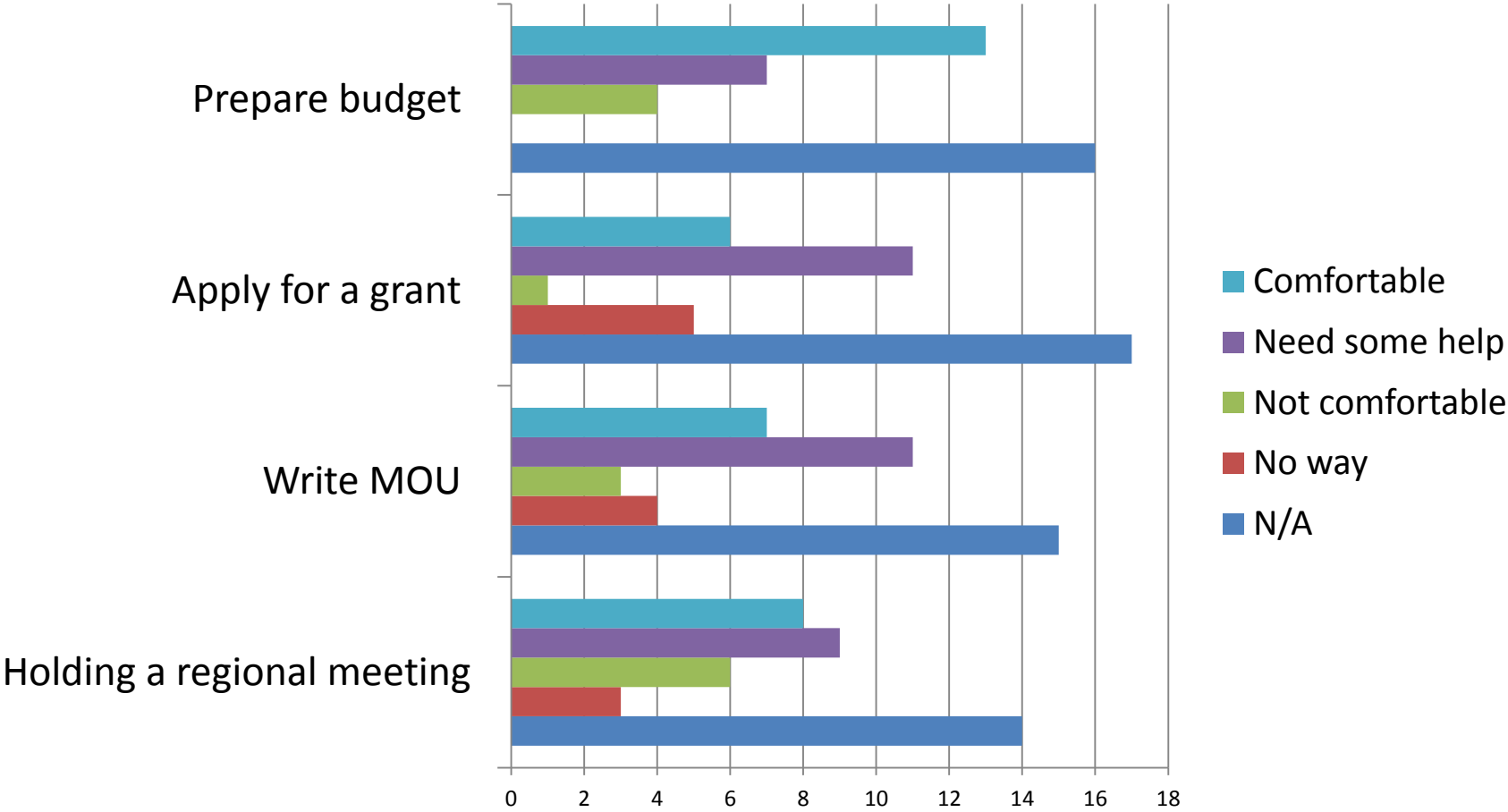
# Ways Chairs and Supervisors Enhance their Job
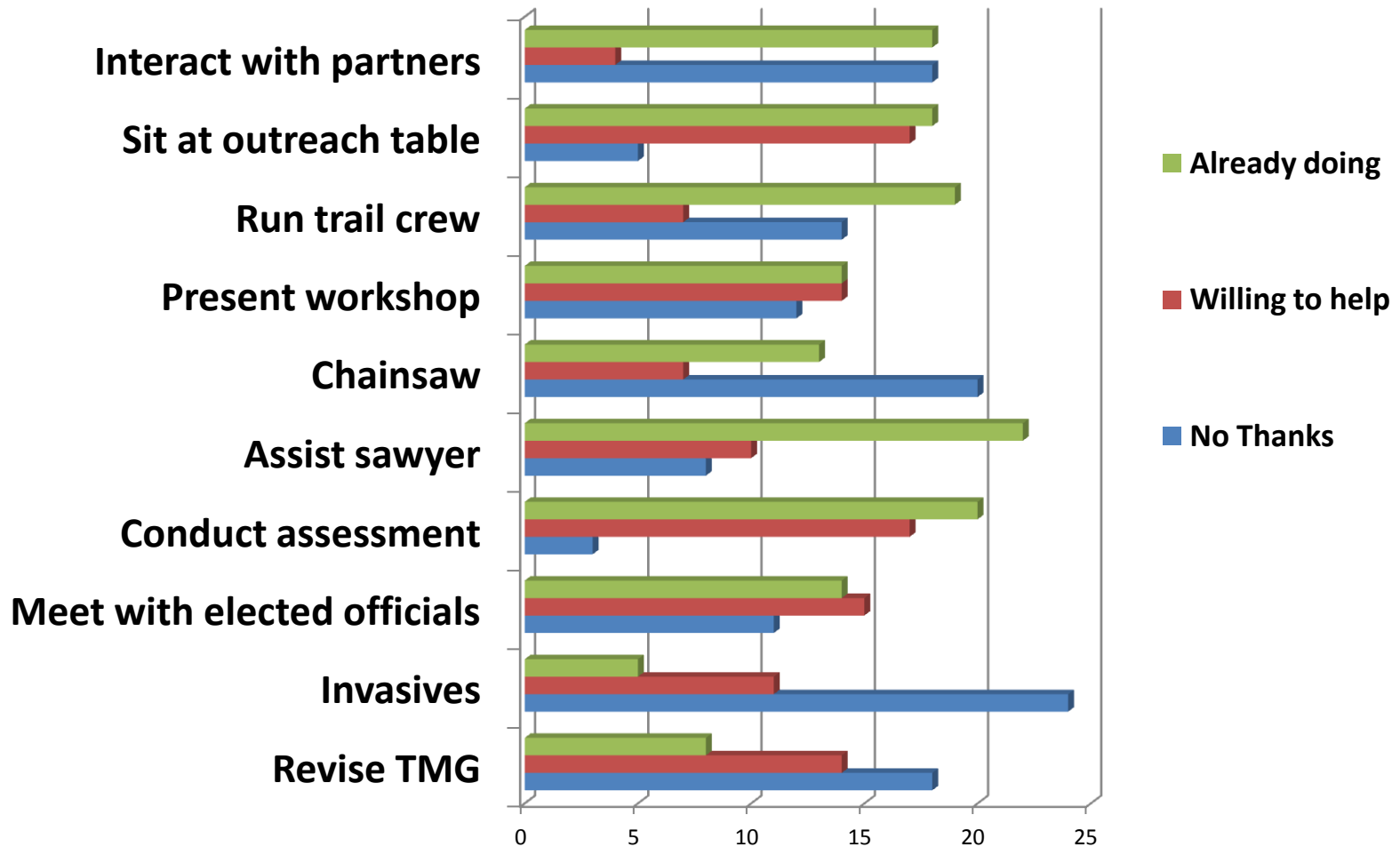
# Other Enhancements

- Develop workshops

- Recruit maintainers

- Involve groups

- Engage youth in projects

- Be part of the AT Regional Management Committee

- Take additional workshops

# As trails chair or supervisor, what are your interactions with trail crews?
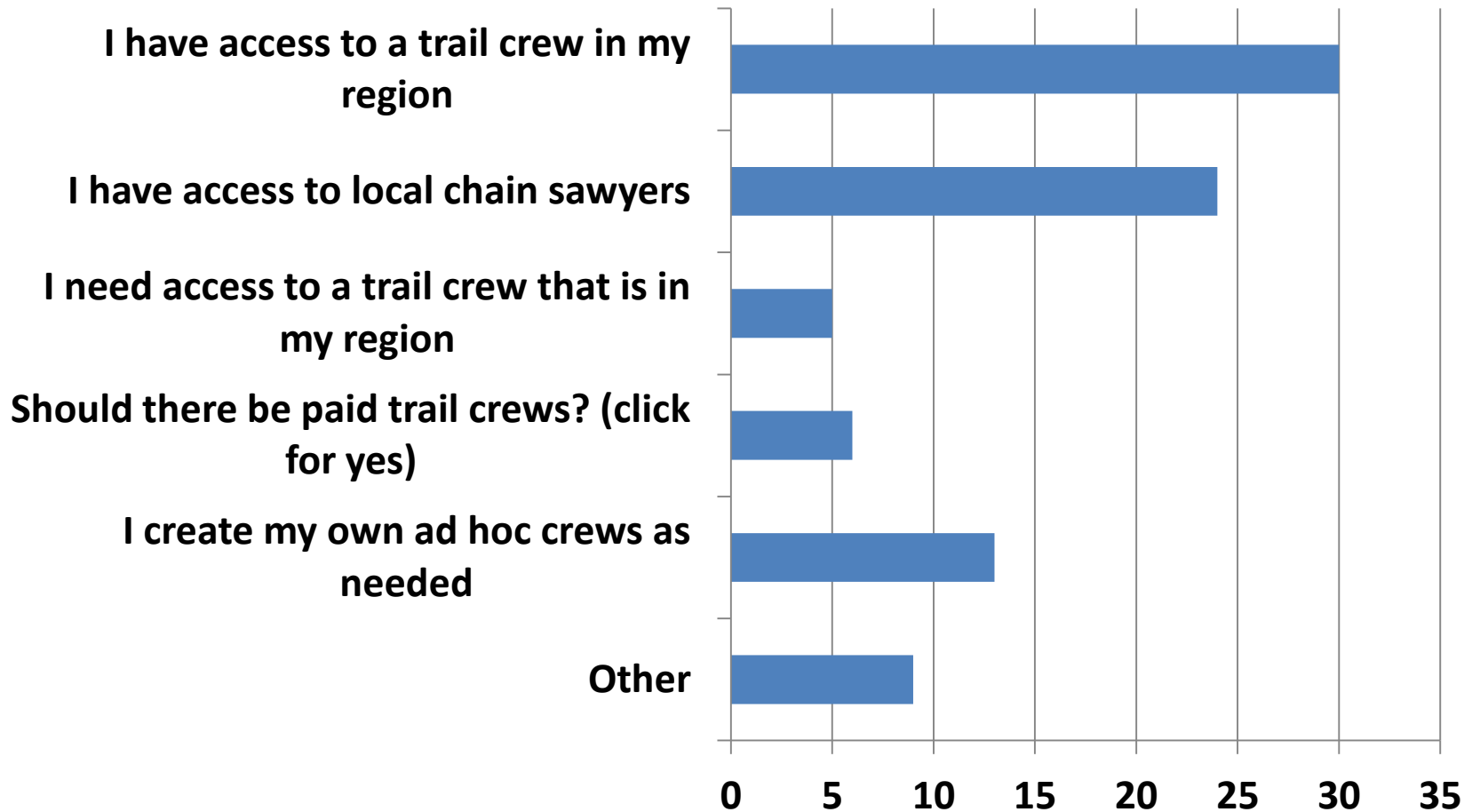
# Paid Interns

- Staff members (4 out of 6) and one volunteer, said *yes*
- Remaining staff said *maybe*
- All other volunteers said *no* (27) and *maybe* (21)

# Who sets trail crew priorities?



- I want to set priorities for my crew
- I will negotiate about priorities
- Its ok that the crew chief sets priorities
- The program coordinator sets priorities
- The program coordinator facilitates setting priorities
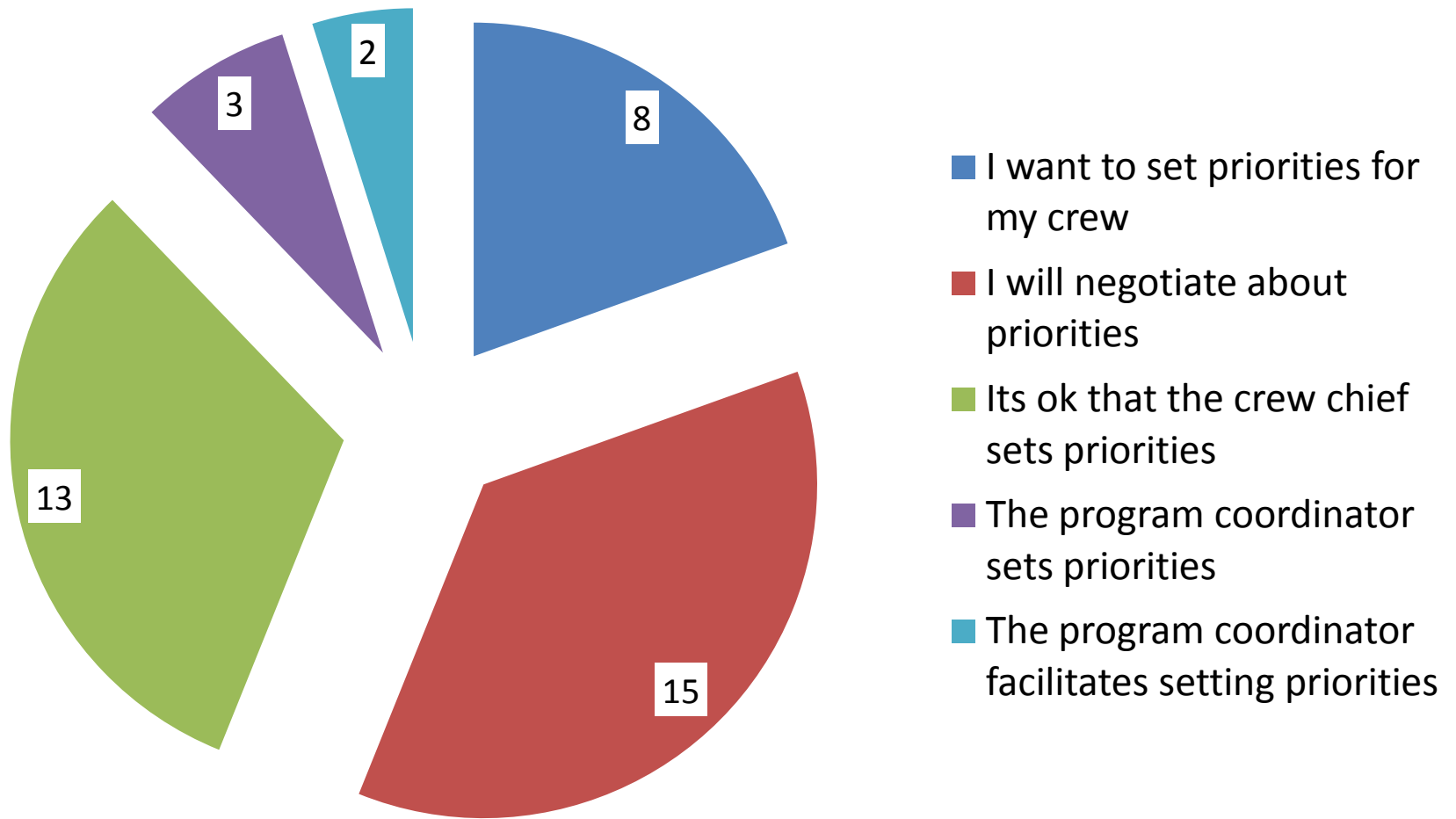
# Crew Chiefs Responsibilities



Legend:
- Comfortable
- Need some help
- Not comfortable
- No Way
- N/A

Categories (top to bottom):
- Assessing trail problems
- Priortizing projects
- Managing the crew
- Managing records
- Being a cerrified sawyer
- Preparing a budget
- Applying for a grant

X-axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25
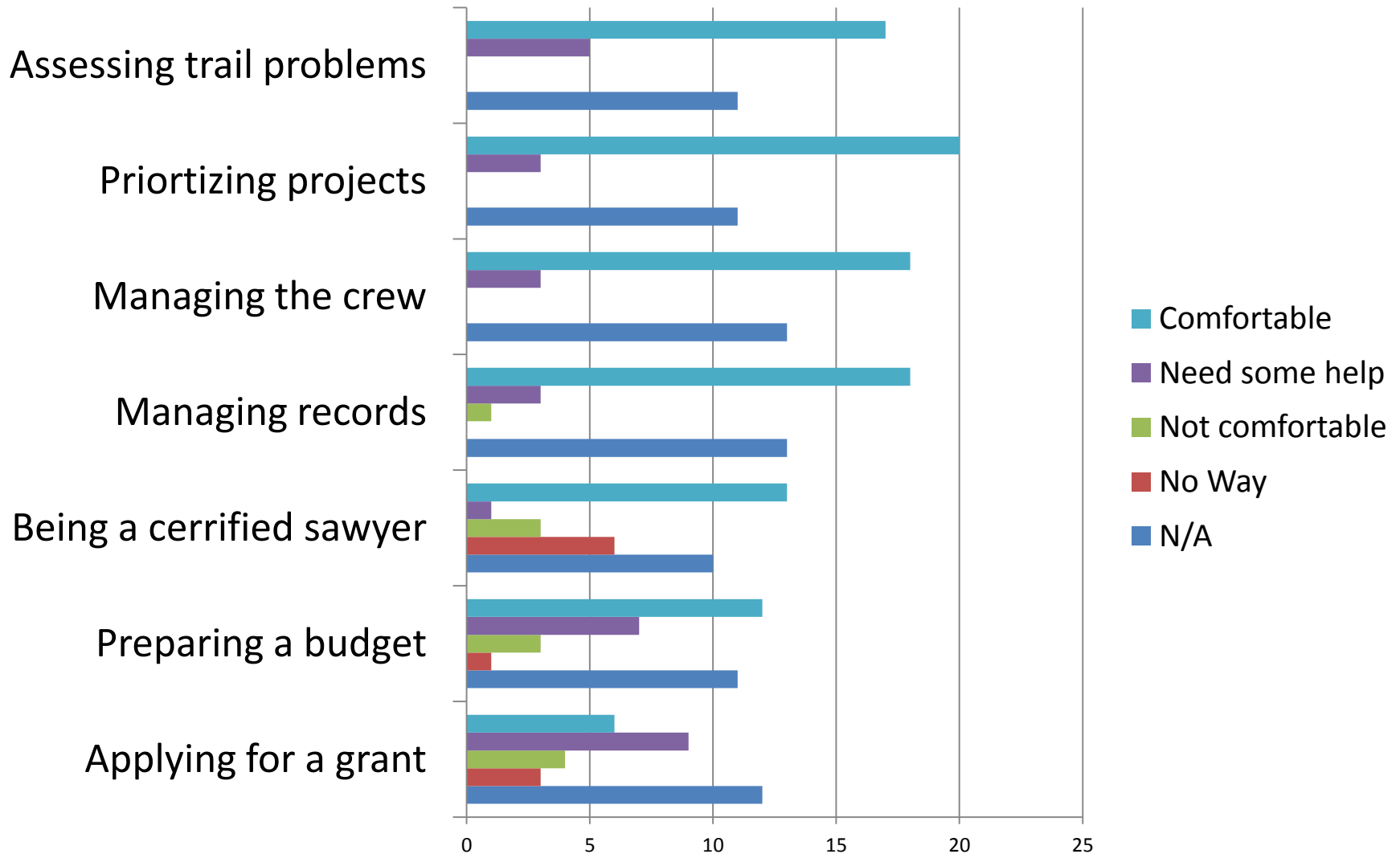
# Ways crew leader enhance their job

- Build group camaraderie
  - Provide treats during and after trail work trips
  - Provide time for socialization  such as lunch, after the work trip, and some non-work hikes.
- Encourage maintaining groups to coordinate projects
- Recruit by posting at local businesses, bulletin boards, and online
- Document projects though photos
- Submit projects to local media
- Invite reporters to projects
- Solicit donations such as water, food, gear

# Training Issues

- Training is needed for two out of the four corridor managers
  - One could use some help in assessing boundary problems.
  - One felt that managing the monitors was not applicable
- Maintainers unaware of the responsibility involved in their volunteer position: they control whether their trail is a positive or a negative experience for hikers

Not enough time?
Suggested ways to get the job done
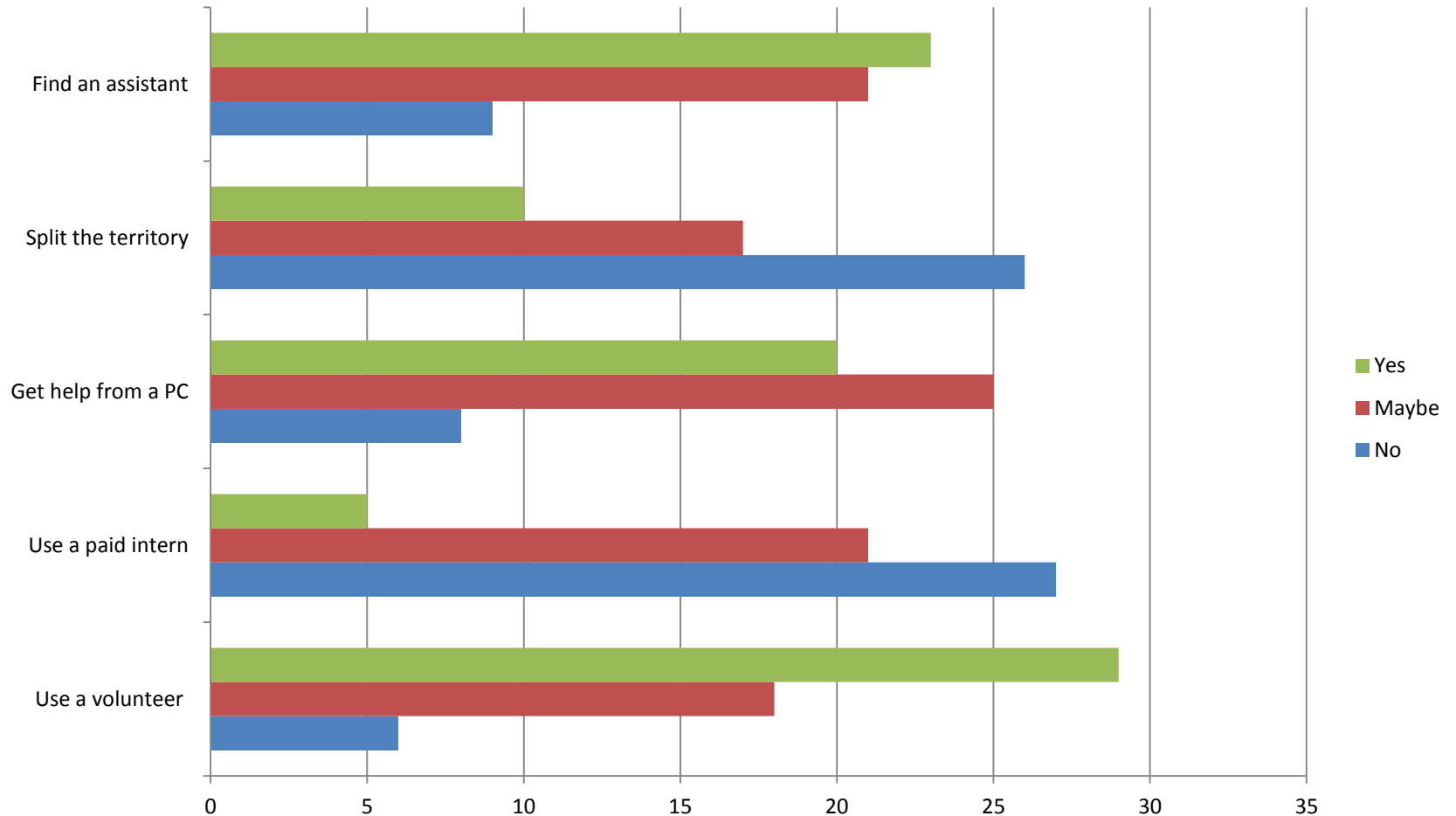
# Other ways to get the job done

- Ask for help from a local hiking club
- Contact local groups including youth organizations and corporations
- Enlist help from land owner/partner
- Request help from chairs, supervisors or crews out of your area.

# Make reporting system web based

| | Yes | Not thrilled | Maybe | No |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fill out web forms for reportees without web access | 24 | 14 | 10 | 5 |
| Update information about my reportees | 35 | 8 | 8 | 2 |
| Review and correct what my reportees have entered | 33 | 8 | 9 | 3 |
| Make changes in the trails data base | 29 | 6 | 11 | 7 |
| Help design forms needed to make the system possible | 24 | 7 | 12 | 10 |
| Willing to test a new system | 33 | 7 | 9 | 4 |
| Learn enough to make the new system happen | 32 | 6 | 8 | 7 |
| Stay with current paper system | 4 | 5 | 18 | 26 |

# Additional Comments

- Return to volunteer driven model

- PCs are valuable resources

- No new projects without everyone knowing what is happening

- More budget for volunteer recruiting, signage

- More advocacy for park budgets

- Increase volunteer to volunteer communication

- More review and action on submitted reports

# Observations

- All chairs and supervisors take on an extra responsibility and share that expertise

- Only 5 people said they needed access to a trail crew

- Meetings should be face to face as needed and at least once a year.

- PCs are valuable resources

# Topics for future discussion

- Trail approval process –do it regionally?
- How to accommodate people who have too long a drive or a permanent time conflict
- Should we track hours individually? Or just chair summaries?
- How do we get the TMG done?
- How many crews do we need? What kinds?
- Should we hold more short, focused polls? (maybe even vote)

# Suggestions based on comments about Trails Council

- Hold regional Trails Council meetings with full Trails Council meetings held less frequently to discuss issues which affect all regions/districts.

- Hold a call-in and/or video chat format to attend some meetings.

- Meet with a small regional group and "Skype" in to NJ meeting

# Follow up to the Survey

- Find ways to improve communication
- Establish a practice of no new projects without everyone knowing what is happening
- Use training to increase everyone's skills and knowledge – particularly with budgets
- Clarify whose responsibility it is to update SMS
- Fix the reporting problems by starting on line reporting
- Thus return to volunteer driven organization

# Follow up from the discussion at the 10/3/13 Trails Council meeting

- Have staff make a presentation justifying paid interns
- Hold discussions at future Trails Council meetings
- Contact people willing to help with
  - developing online reporting and testing the forms
  - workshops , TMG, outreach tables, trail crew, trail assessments, Invasive Strike Force, meet with elected officials, chainsawing, and assisting sawyers