

Risk Factors for Dog Relinquishment to a Los Angeles Municipal Animal Shelter

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Introduction and Objective

- **Owner relinquishment is a driver of canine shelter intake in the U.S.**
 - Accounted for 23% of canine shelter intake at South LA shelter in 2014.
- **Why do people relinquish?**
 - Traits of the dog (ex. size, age, behavior)
 - General characteristics of the owner and the household (ex. allergies, living situation)
 - Low income is often cited as a risk factor for relinquishment, yet the majority of people with lower incomes do not relinquish.
- **Little is known about the process leading to relinquishment (e.g., household barriers and options considered)**
- **Within a community marked by high poverty, what risk factors contribute to dog relinquishment?**

Survey Method

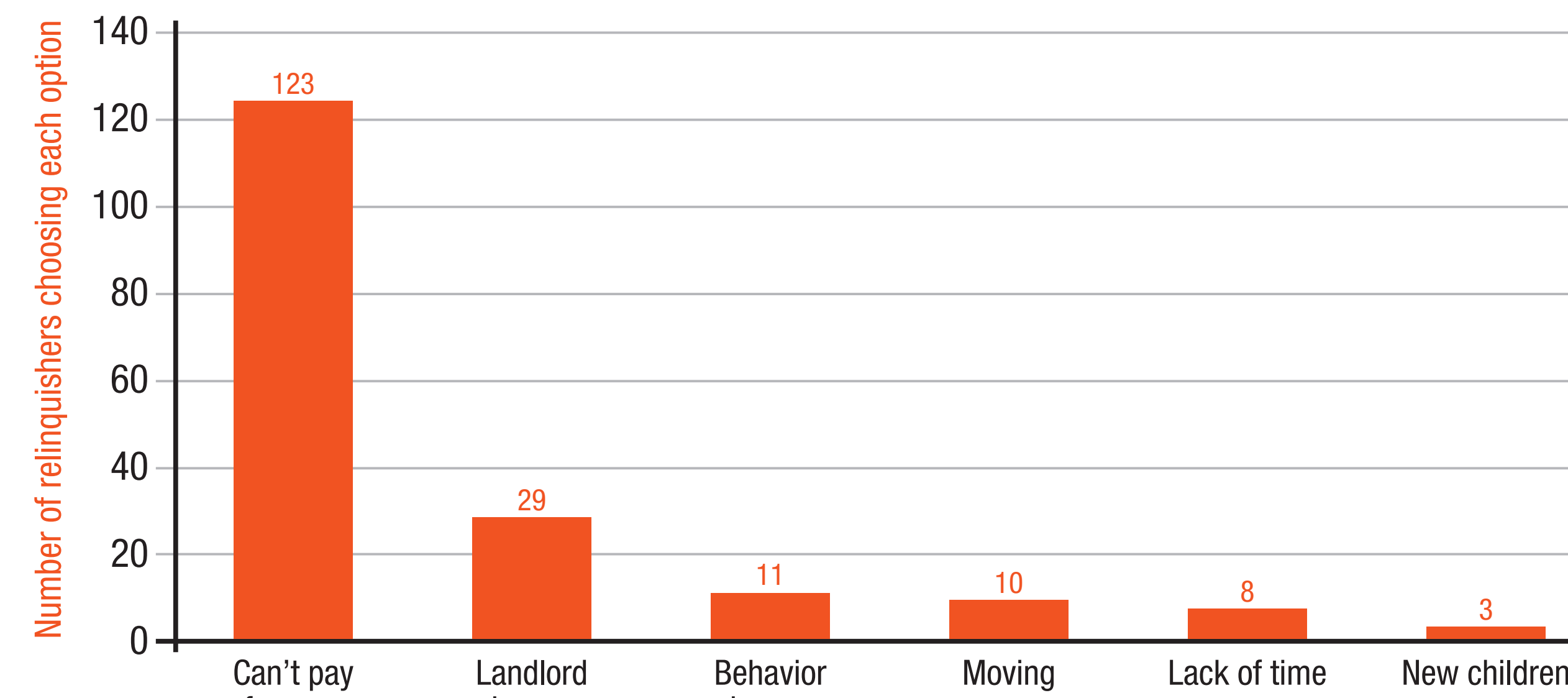
- **Conducted at the South Los Angeles/Chesterfield Square municipal animal shelter**
 - Serves poverty dense community
 - Open admission
- **Are you here to give up your pet?**
- **Relinquisher group: n=166 dogs**
 - After survey, offered a choice: either proceed to shelter to relinquish or go to safety net program to see if they could help
- **Control group: n=125 dogs**
 - Same geographic region
 - Accessing the shelter for S/N at ASPCA clinic or mobile clinic



Results

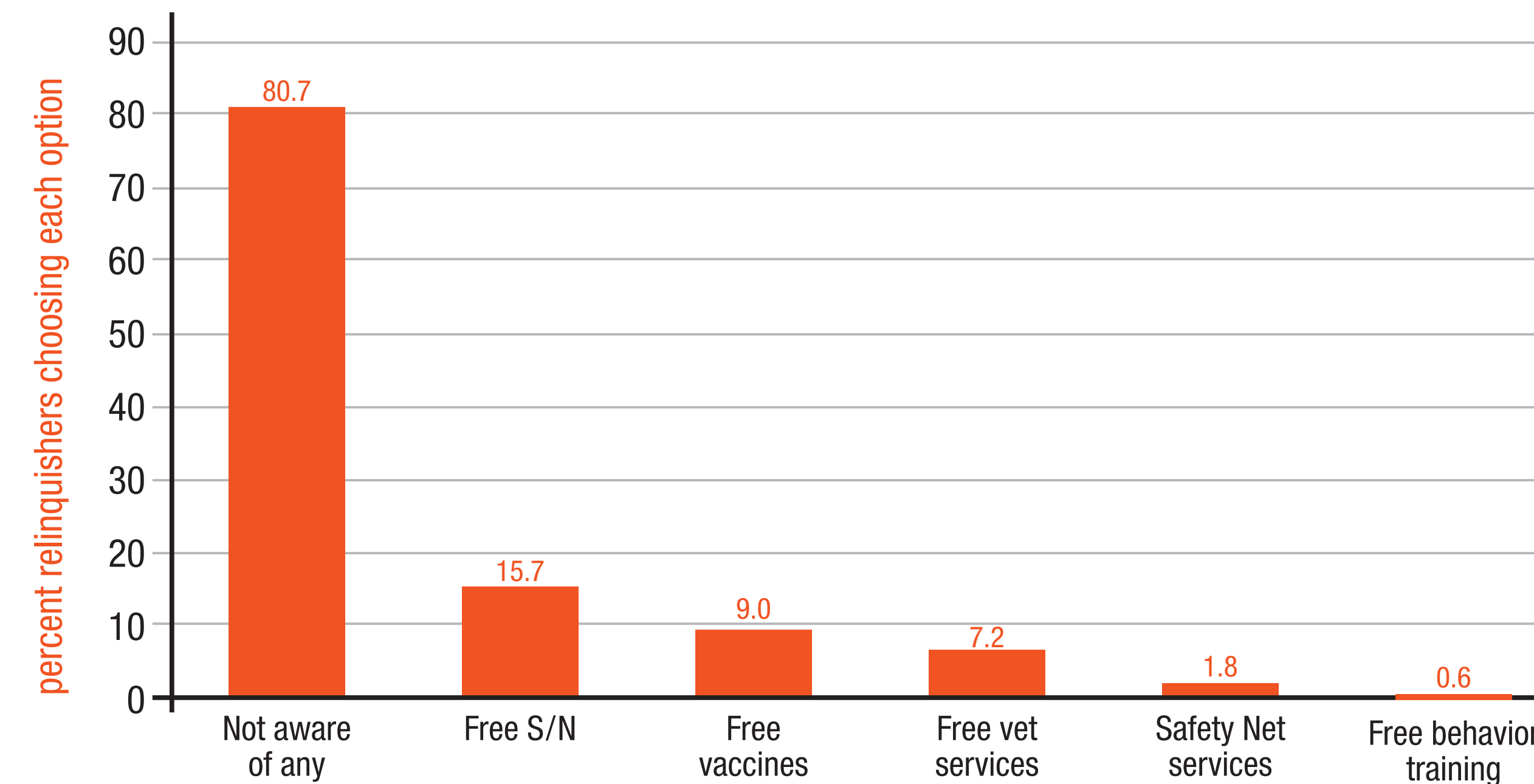
Among the Relinquishers Only CONTINUED

Has anything changed recently in the household that contributed to the decision to bring this pet to the shelter now?

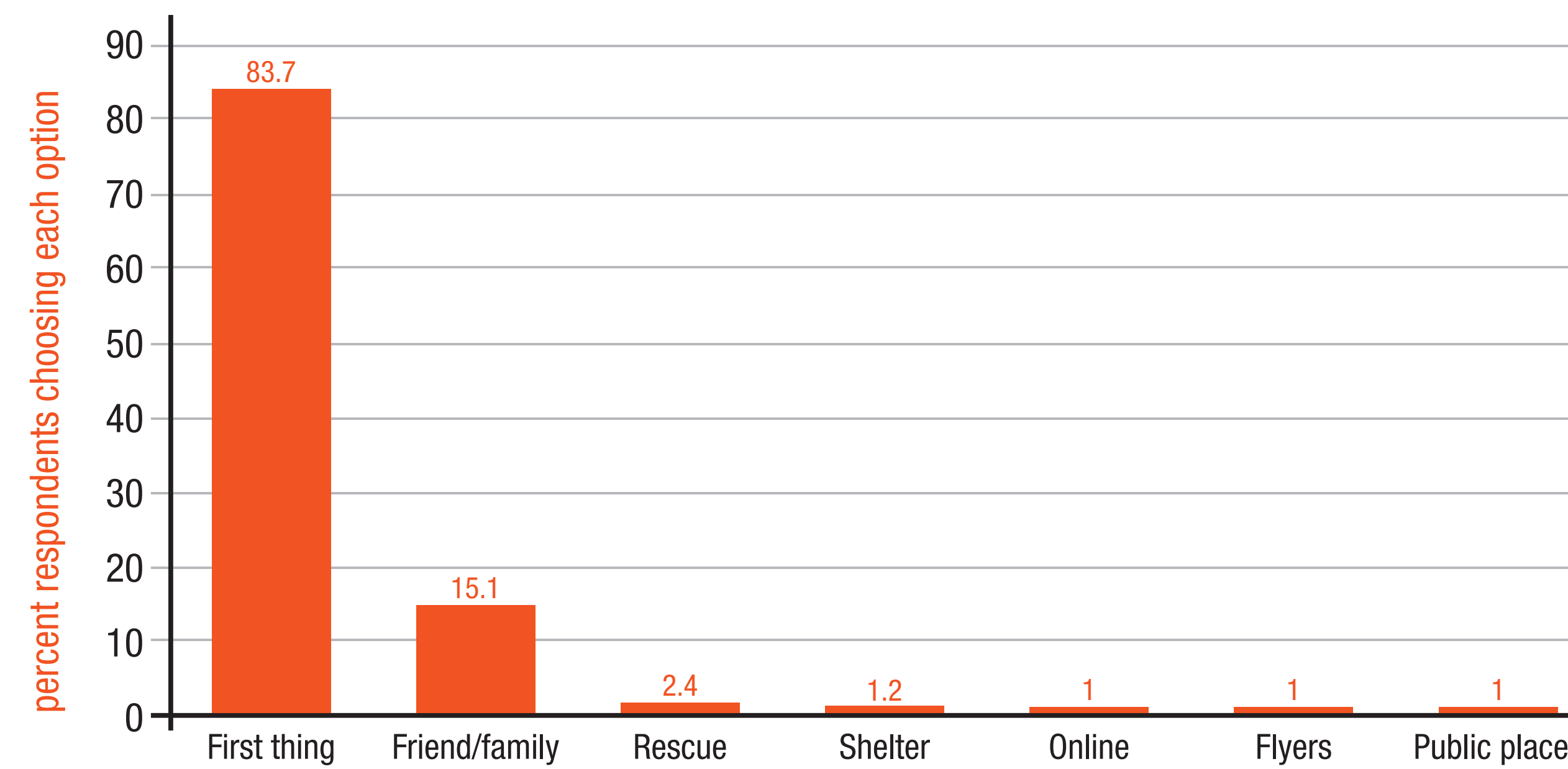


- Inability to pay for care frequently cited (76.9%) as something that had changed in the household
- 81% of Relinquishers reported not being aware of ways to get help
- Relinquishers infrequently (16%) reported attempts to re-home
- 96% of all relinquishers chose to pursue Safety Net services instead of relinquishing

Before you came in today, did you know about any ways to get help for your dog? Please circle all that apply.



Before you came in today, did you do anything to find your dog a new home? Please circle all that apply.

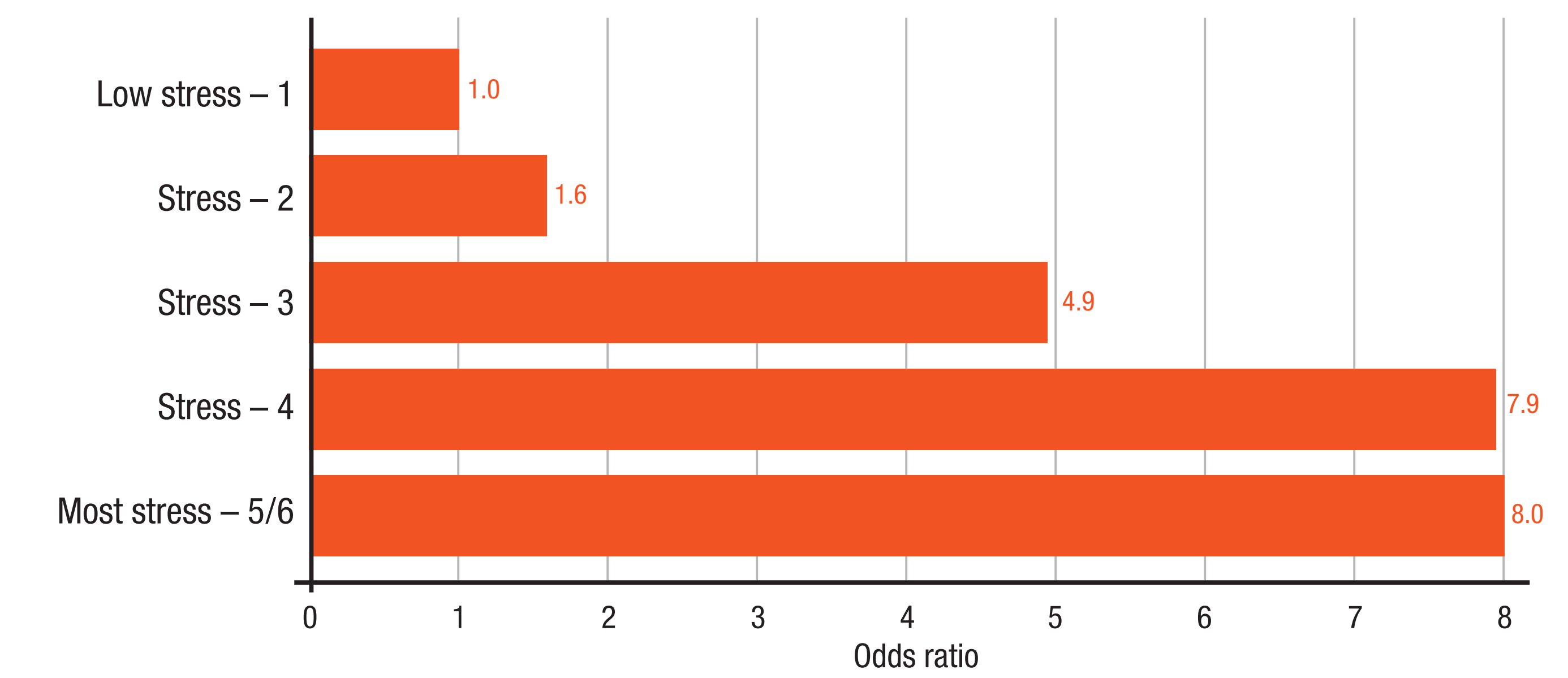


Results

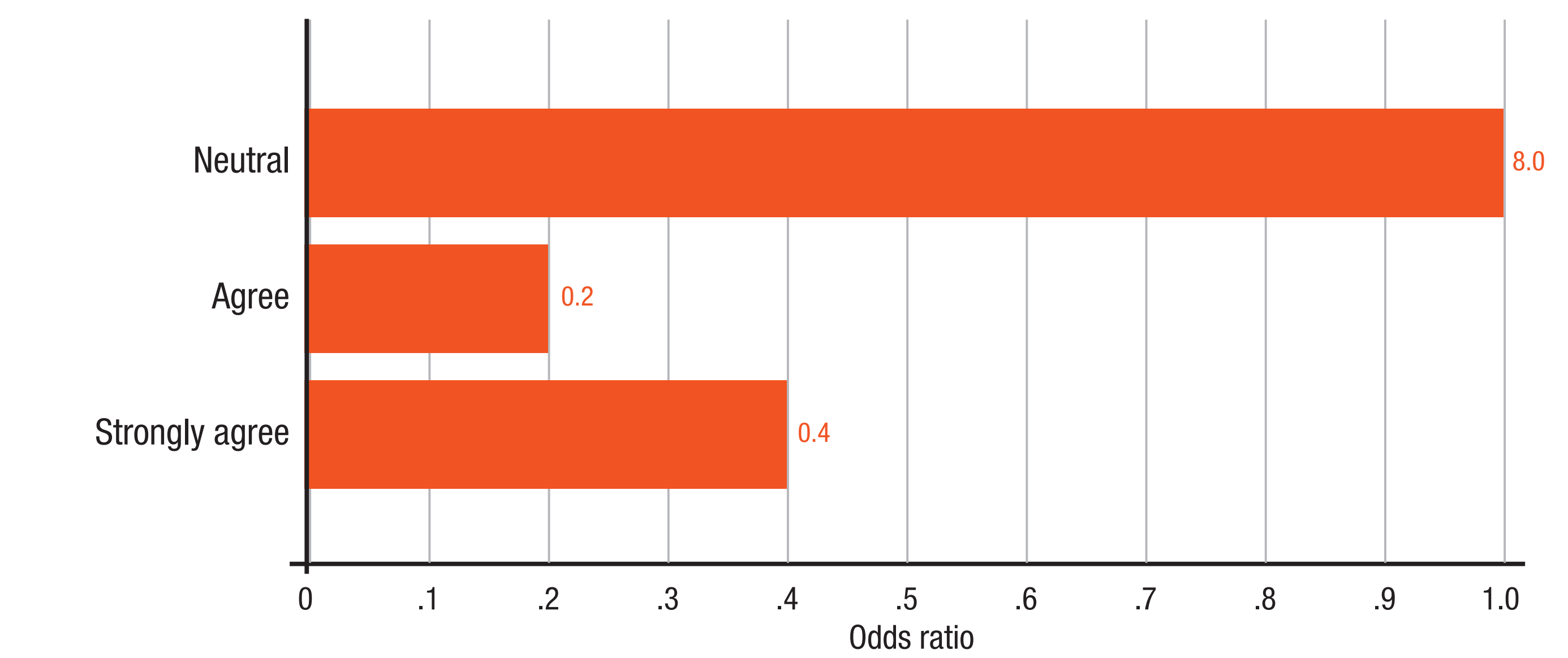
Multi-Variable Analysis

Controlled for income, education, sex, dog age, where the dog was living, number of other animals in the house and being on public assistance.

Odds of relinquishment were significantly higher with greater reported stress in the home over the last 3 months



Odds of relinquishment were lower with greater emotional attachment

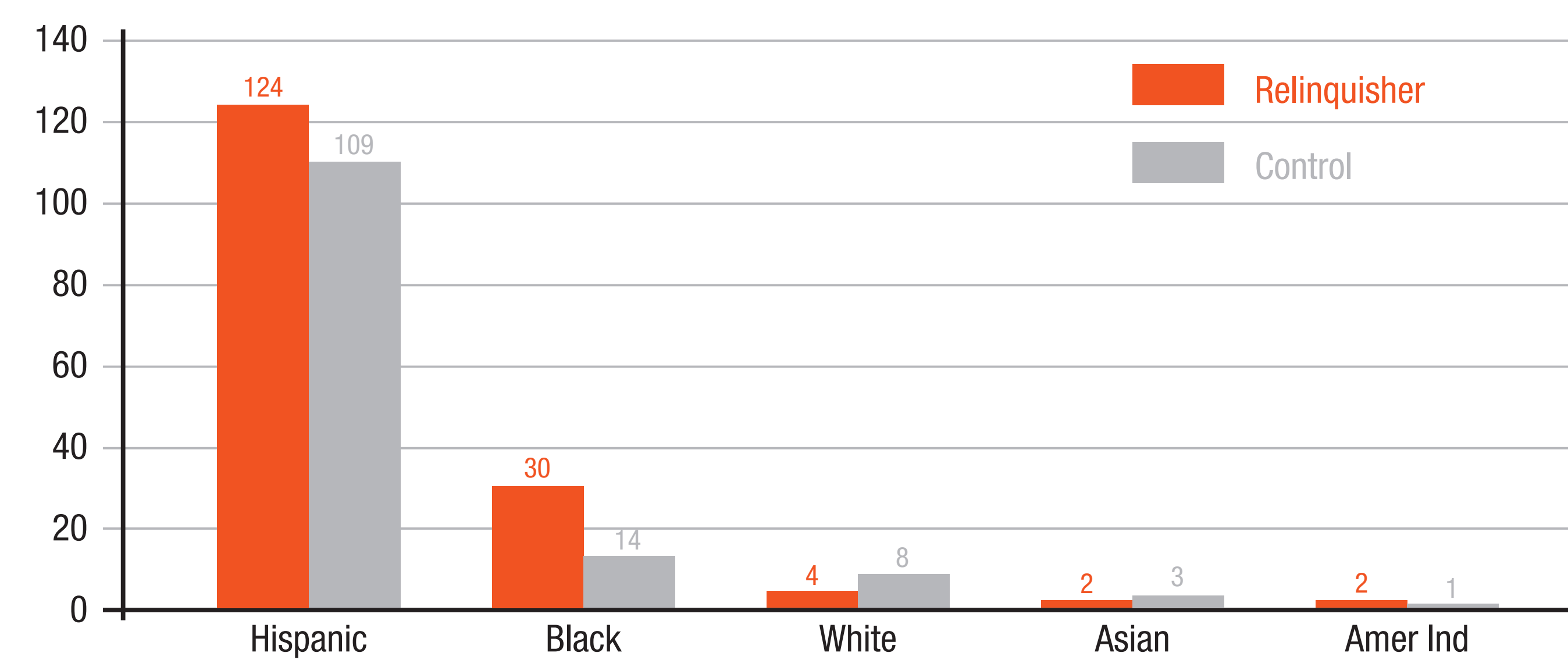


No significant association between relinquishment and:

- whether the dog behaved as expected
- the dog was more work than expected

Results

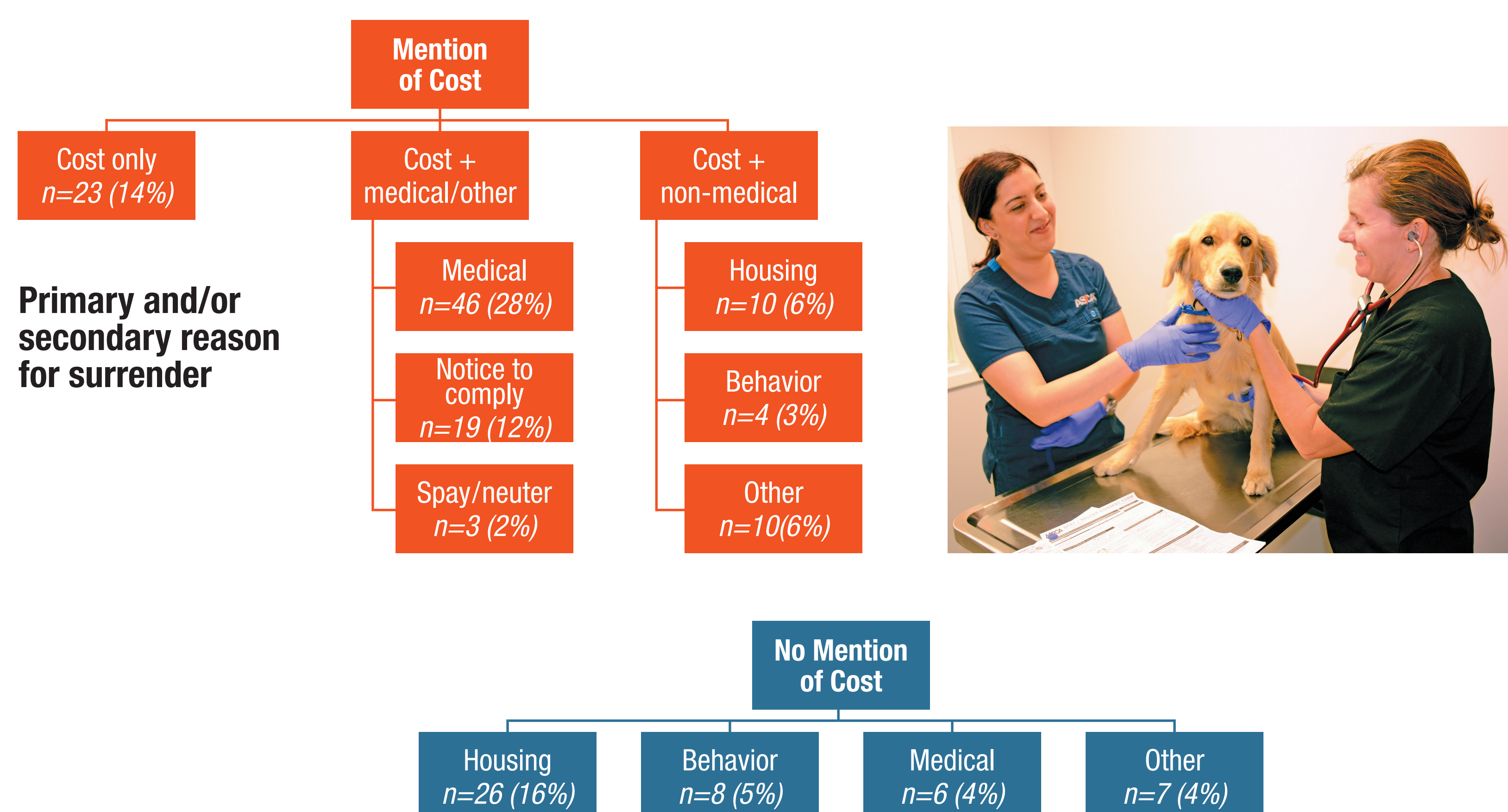
Who We Surveyed



Both groups were:

- Predominately Spanish speaking
- 2/3 of people were employed either full or part time
- 90% were aged 18-59
- The majority of respondents:
 - were not on public assistance
 - were female
 - had a household income less than \$30,000 per year
 - rent their homes
 - had at least a high school diploma or GED

Among the Relinquishers Only



Conclusions

Many risks for relinquishment in this high poverty community = problems where assistance could likely prevent the relinquishment.

- Cost, notably medical costs, were most commonly cited and reported as something that had changed in the household
- Relinquishers reported not knowing about alternatives to relinquishment
- Almost all relinquishers chose to pursue help when it was offered

The odds of relinquishing were greater with higher stress in the household

The odds of relinquishing were lower when owner was emotionally attached

Most reported at least some attachment

Providing accessible, community-specific alternatives to relinquishment may be a way to reduce shelter intake of dogs

