

Summary of the findings from the Community Learning Survey

1. What happened, why and the acknowledgements -

The survey was carried out in June and July 2005 and the researcher met with 43 local people who are active in the community, or who were open to becoming active, and worked with them to complete a survey that looked at:

- the types participation in the community they were involved in;
- the sorts of learning that they felt would support the development of their community participation and action;
- the sorts of 'learning support' that would be useful to them in their learning .

This survey highlighted key themes for consideration by the researcher, the Capacity Building Project staff team, partner organisations, and the 'Active Communities' advisory group in their work to develop a community learning programme which would support a range of community participation, community action, and related lifelong learning in the area.

The researcher and the Craigmillar Capacity Building Project would like to offer many thanks to the 43 local people who took part, and the organisations listed below who supported the researcher in making contacting with local people and groups. The support of both individuals and organisations was absolutely crucial to the further development of the learning programme. Organisations and groups that supported the survey:

Adult Learning Link, Be Well, Caring in Craigmillar, Castleview Parents Group, City of Edinburgh Council's Community Education (Craigmillar Community High School) Office, Craigmillar Castle Regeneration Group, Craigmillar Community Arts, Craigmillar Community Council, (Craigmillar) Community Regeneration Forum, Craigmillar Neighbourhood Alliance, East Edinburgh Older People's Forum, Greendykes Neighbourhood Association, Hunters Hall Housing Coop.

2. Key findings from the survey for the development of a community learning programme:

2a. Understanding the 'types' of active people who took part in the survey: Table 1a shows that the people who were involved represented a range of roles within the community – not active presently, volunteering or helping out, leading/organising/teaching, working community-wide. A closer look at this information (not illustrated in table 1a) shows that many

people combine roles: just over 15% undertook both volunteering and leading/organising roles, and about 25% had both a community-wide role and a volunteering or a leading role.

Table 1b shows the particular participation of women, disabled people and people between the ages of 25-64 within the survey. This bias fits with the researcher's *perceptions* from the work on the main research report that showed that these particular groups of people were very likely to be active in the community. However this emphasis almost certainly over-represents these groups within the survey findings.

The researcher also met with many younger people (16-24) and older people (64+), Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people, and men who were active or looking to be active within this community. Much depends on how you interpret 'participation', the organisations you are able to link-up with, and the resources available to support participation. It is therefore certainly the case that younger people, older people, BME people, and men in general are under-represented within the survey - although a significant number of men did take part.

Future survey work would need more time to adapt to better take in this fuller diversity. In developing the learning programme the researcher and others involved will need to bare in mind the limitations of this survey and the need for a fuller diversity of the community to be considered in the actual development of the learning programme.

2b. Prioritising what people are wanting to learn: Participants in the survey were asked to prioritise which, from 28 activities or areas of knowledge, would be the most useful to them. These areas of learning came out of the main body of research and related to the following 11 key themes from within that research:

- Communities and their networks
- Local services
- Campaigning and influencing
- People skills
- Organising
- Working within local organisations
- Lifelong learning for community participation
- Diversity within a community

- Participation and partnership-working
- Community Regeneration
- Local decision-making and the wider community

All 28 activities or areas of knowledge, and their related broader themes (11 above), received substantial support within the survey and got at least 25+% of participant support. In this sense, all 28 can be said to be 'entitled' to be considered for inclusion within a learning programme. However the following 16 areas or activities were strongly prioritised by the participants – as they received 50+% support from the participants – and so have been considered crucial for inclusion within the learning programme (see Tables 2a and 2b):

- How communities work
- Community information
- Local services
- Rights as volunteer
- Handling difficult situations
- Health and safety
- Learning skills
- Stories about using learning
- Policies for organisations
- Diversity
- Health and poverty
- Good housing
- Community decisions
- Social inclusion Partnership
- Business and Government
- Regeneration

Table 2c shows how people who are not active presently, or who are working as a volunteer or helping out but not in other ways in the community, and so were probably less likely to have had access to learning for community participation, prioritised these same learning options. There is a not dissimilar pattern but they placed particular emphasis or priority (50+%) on the following 12 activities or knowledge:

- How communities work
- Community information
- Local services
- Rights as volunteer
- Handling difficult situations
- Organising meetings
- Health and safety
- Stories for learning
- Fundraising
- Policies for organisations
- Health and poverty
- Good housing

2c. Suggested framework for developing the courses: This is very much an art not a science but early discussions of these results allowed the researcher, the CBP staff team and the Advisory Group to consider further the following potential outlines for courses:

- One course focused on learning about **'how a community works'** – its networks of support and information, its diversity, its related services, and decision-making processes ... particularly relevant to people starting their learning for community participation;
- One course focused on **policy areas** – community regeneration, housing, business and government, health and poverty, social inclusion partnerships ... also relevant to people starting their learning for community participation;
- One course focused on **community organisations and groups** – policy, health and safety, rights as volunteers, considering funding ... also with relevance to people starting their learning for community participation;

- One course focused on **'people skills' and building your learning for this** – handling difficult situations, using stories as a learning tool, diversity ... particularly relevant to people starting their learning for community participation.

These 4 courses could cover the prioritised learning areas, and bring in most if not all of the other of the 28 learning areas. This thinking was then taken to the CBP staff team and the local Advisory Group for further discussion. Both the staff team and Advisory Group were asked to keep in mind who the key target audience or audiences were, and that the researcher felt that people just starting or seeking to start/develop their community participation should be a key audience, i.e. that one or more of the courses needed to be open and relevant to people with limited experience of community participation and action.

2d. Other dimensions to a learning programme:

Support: the survey showed that the following were particularly important to a range of people and scored 20+% (see Table 3a) – going on a training course, working with others on that training course, having tutors they already knew, getting access to the web, use of DVD.

Using computers: although many people had access to computers at home, or through friends or organisations, a significant number were still looking for information on where to access computers, and for training and advice.

Qualifications: a significant number (50+%) were looking for some sort of qualification from training for community participation that they undertook.

Key messages for a learning programme the researcher 'heard' were:

- The importance of flexibility around learning – different people are looking for different options;
- The value of training courses and working with others to many potential participants but not to all;
- The value of tutors that people already know;
- The importance of supporting people in gaining access to the web
- The importance of working towards getting these community learning courses accredited.

3. Next steps ... The results of the survey and this interpretation were discussed with the CBP staff team and the local Advisory Group, to begin the process of developing a learning programme – see the initial brief, the initial strategy, and the work of the Advisory Group within the Shared Learning section of this Learning Programme.

Table 1a: Roles survey participants take in the community

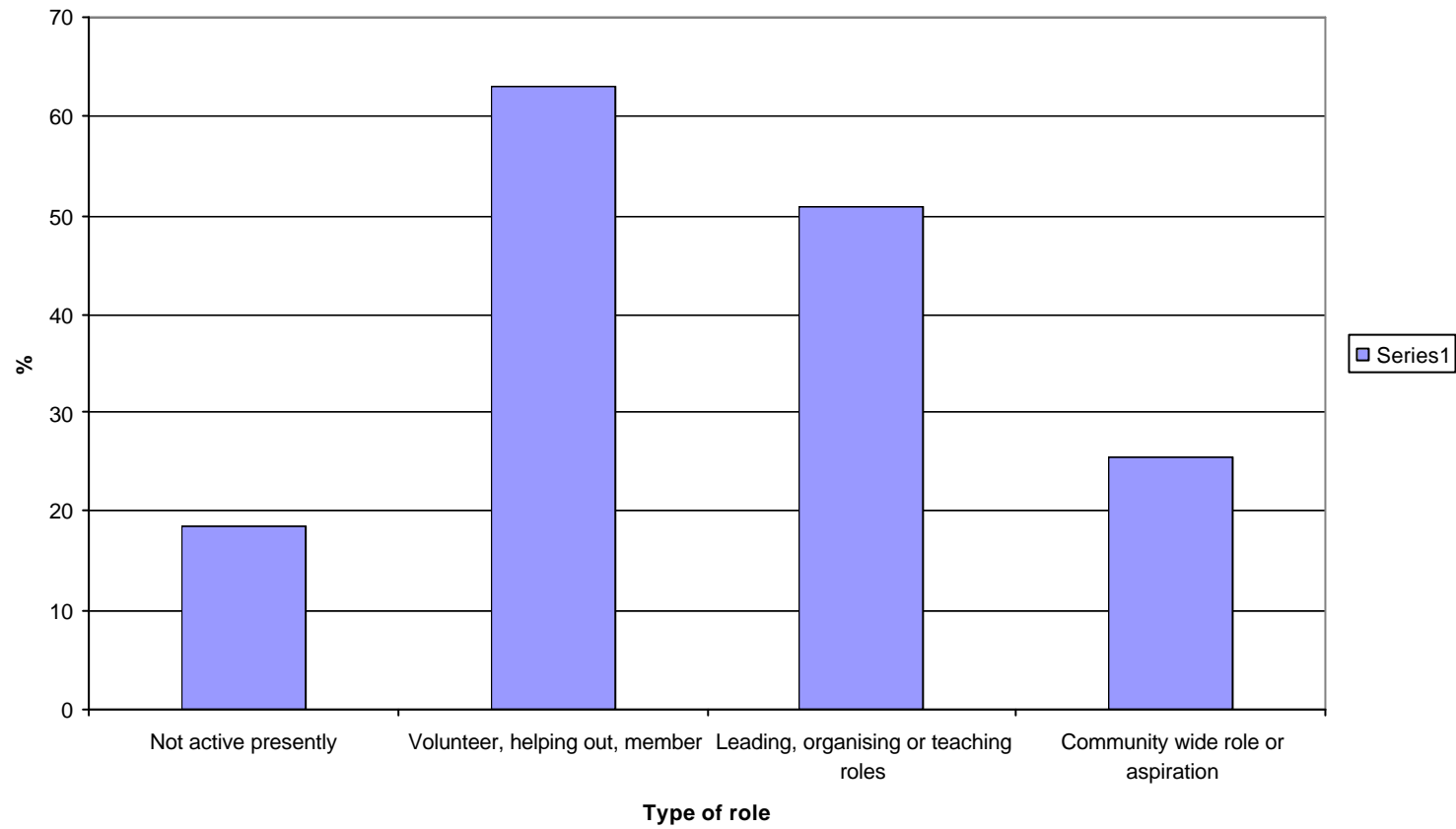


Table 1b: monitoring info from participants who took part in the survey

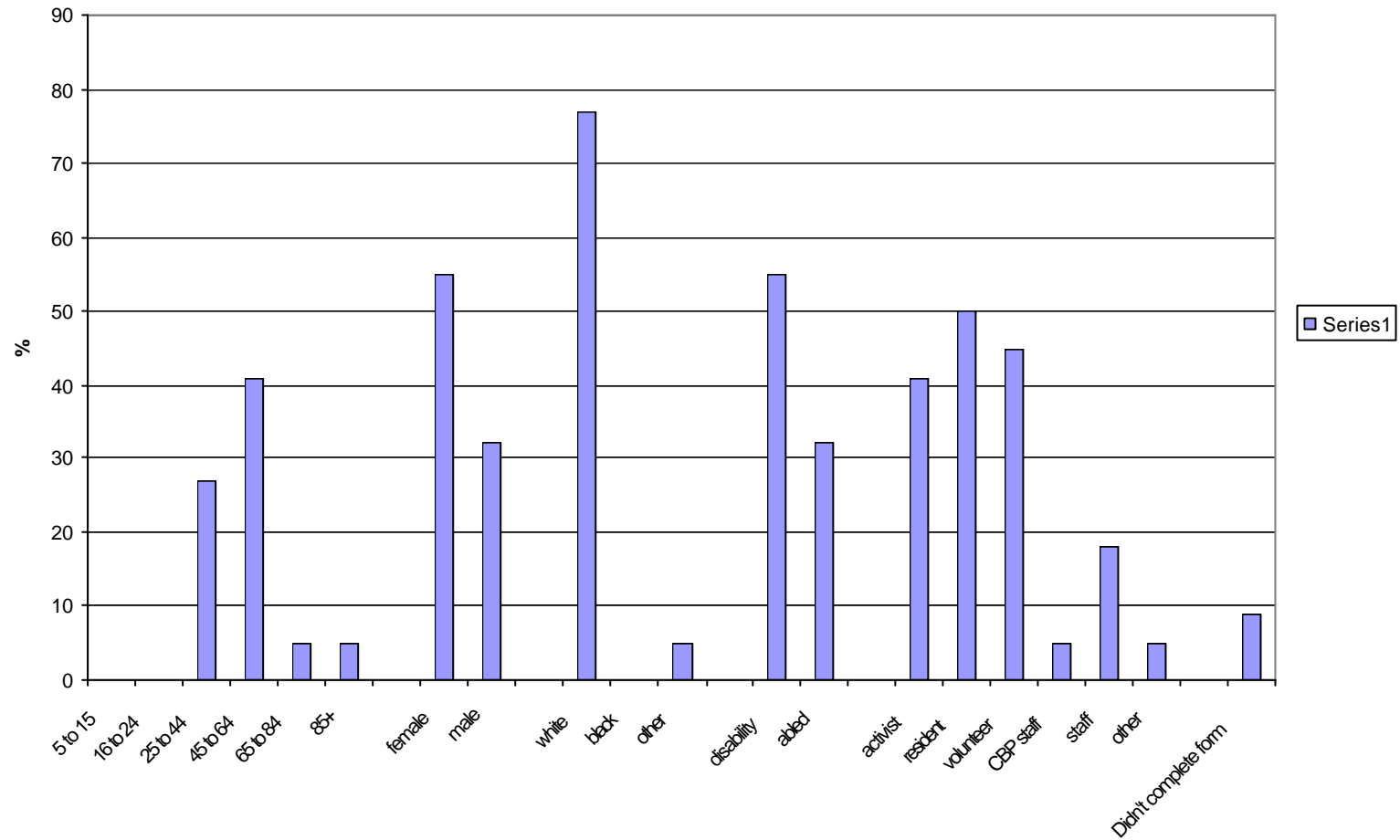


Table 2a: Prioritising by activities - activities 1-13

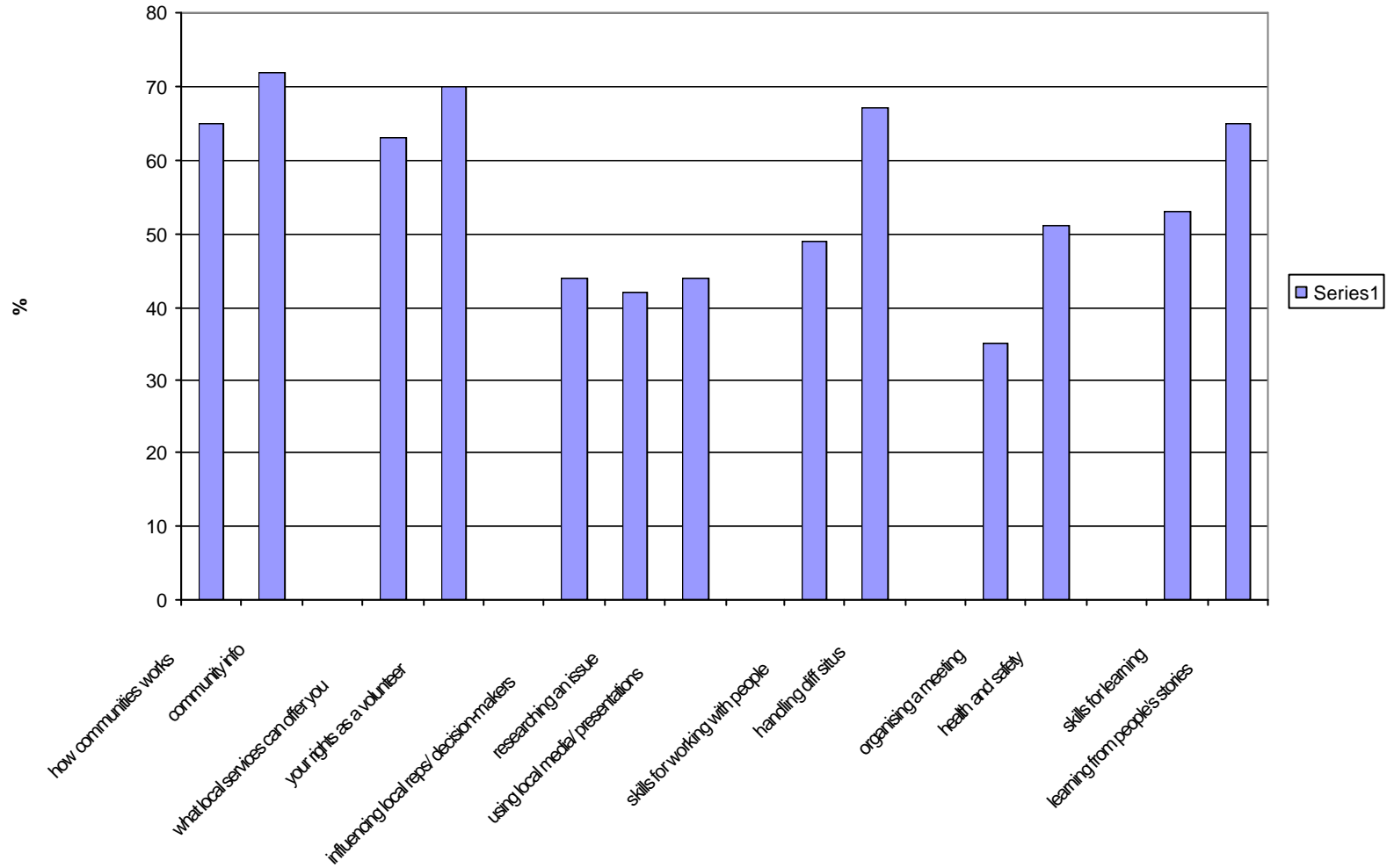


Table 2b: Prioritising by activity - activities 14-28

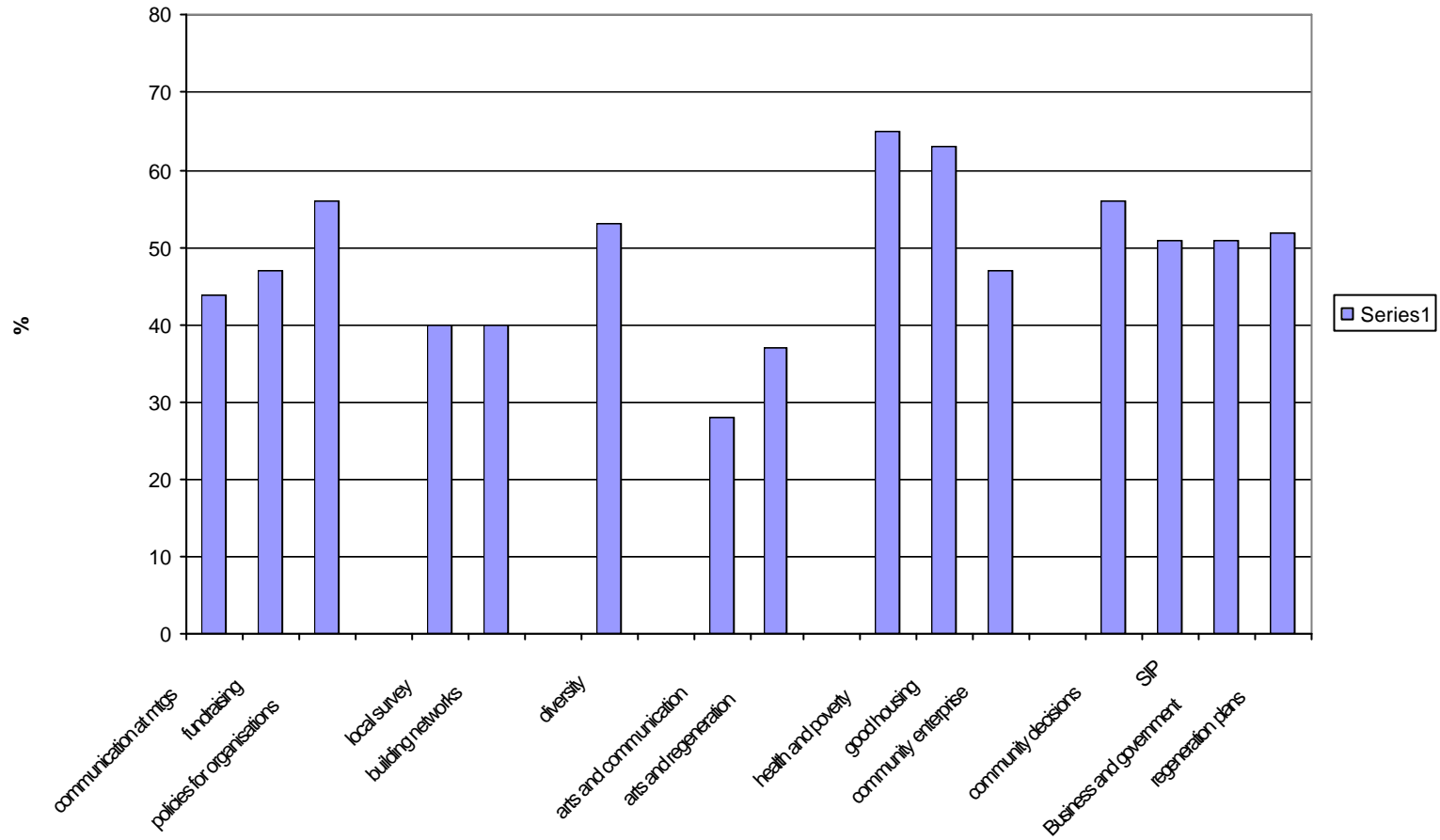


Table 2c: Priorities of people who are volunteers (only), helping out or not presently active

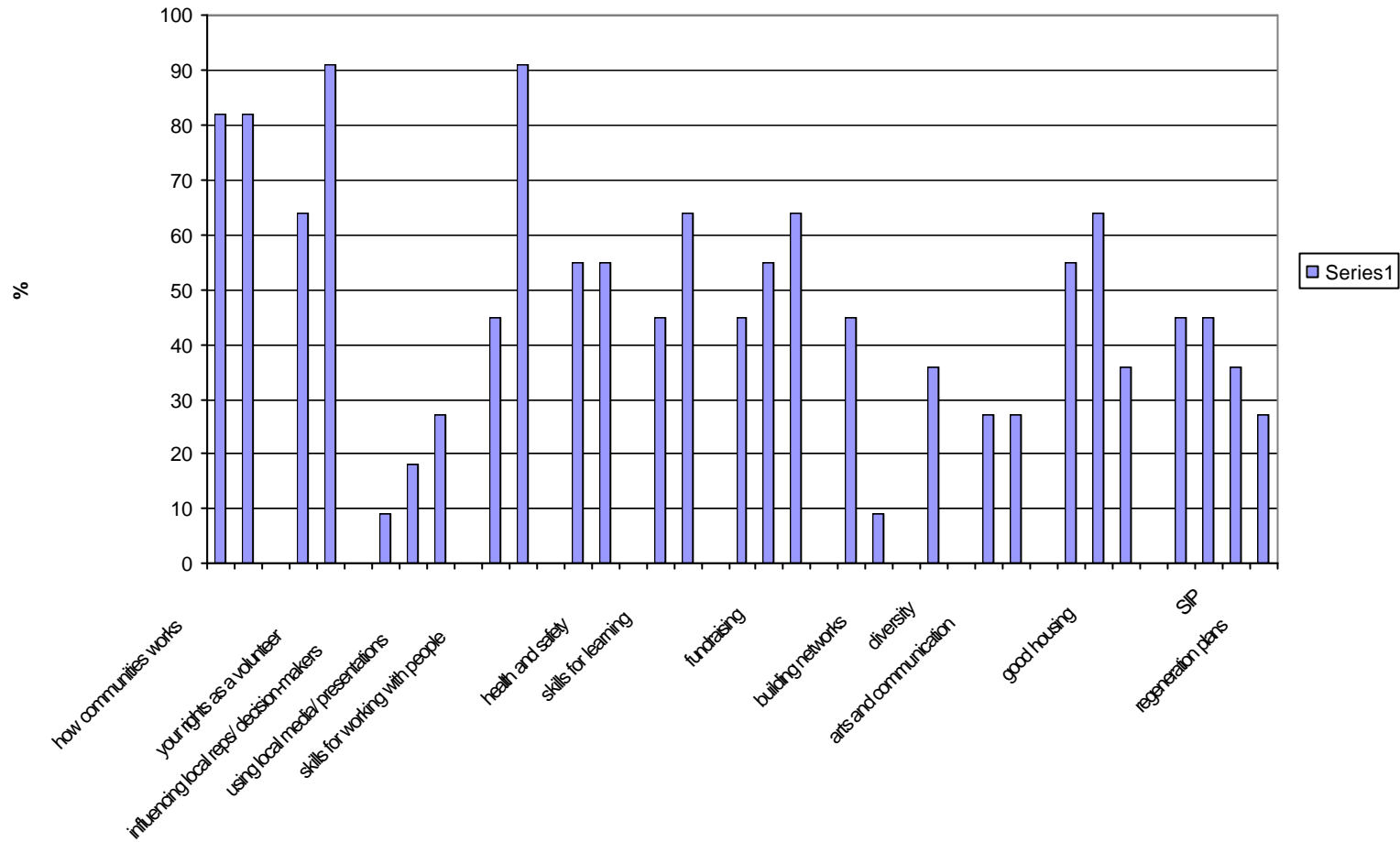


Table 3a: support people are looking for in their learning

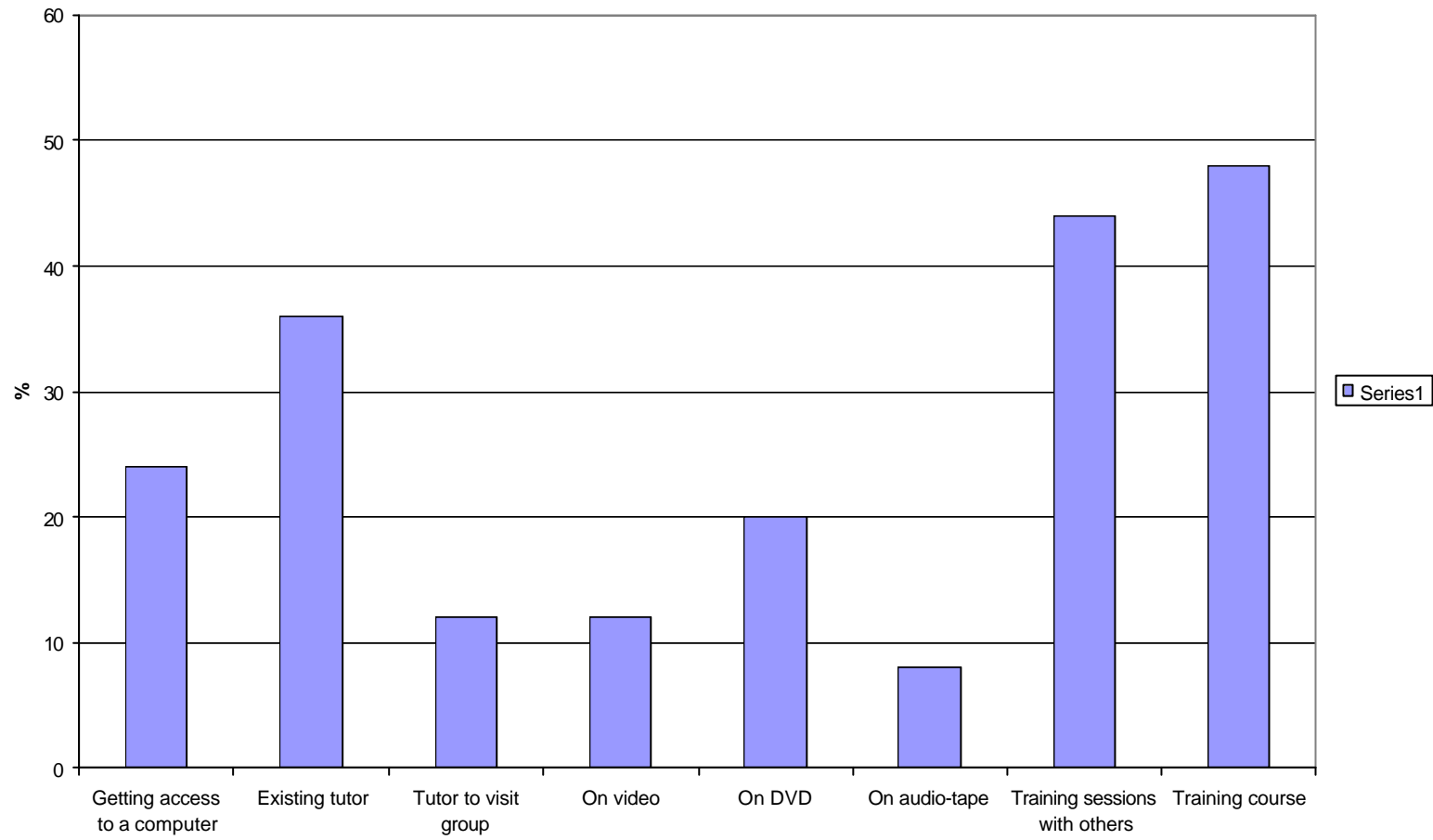
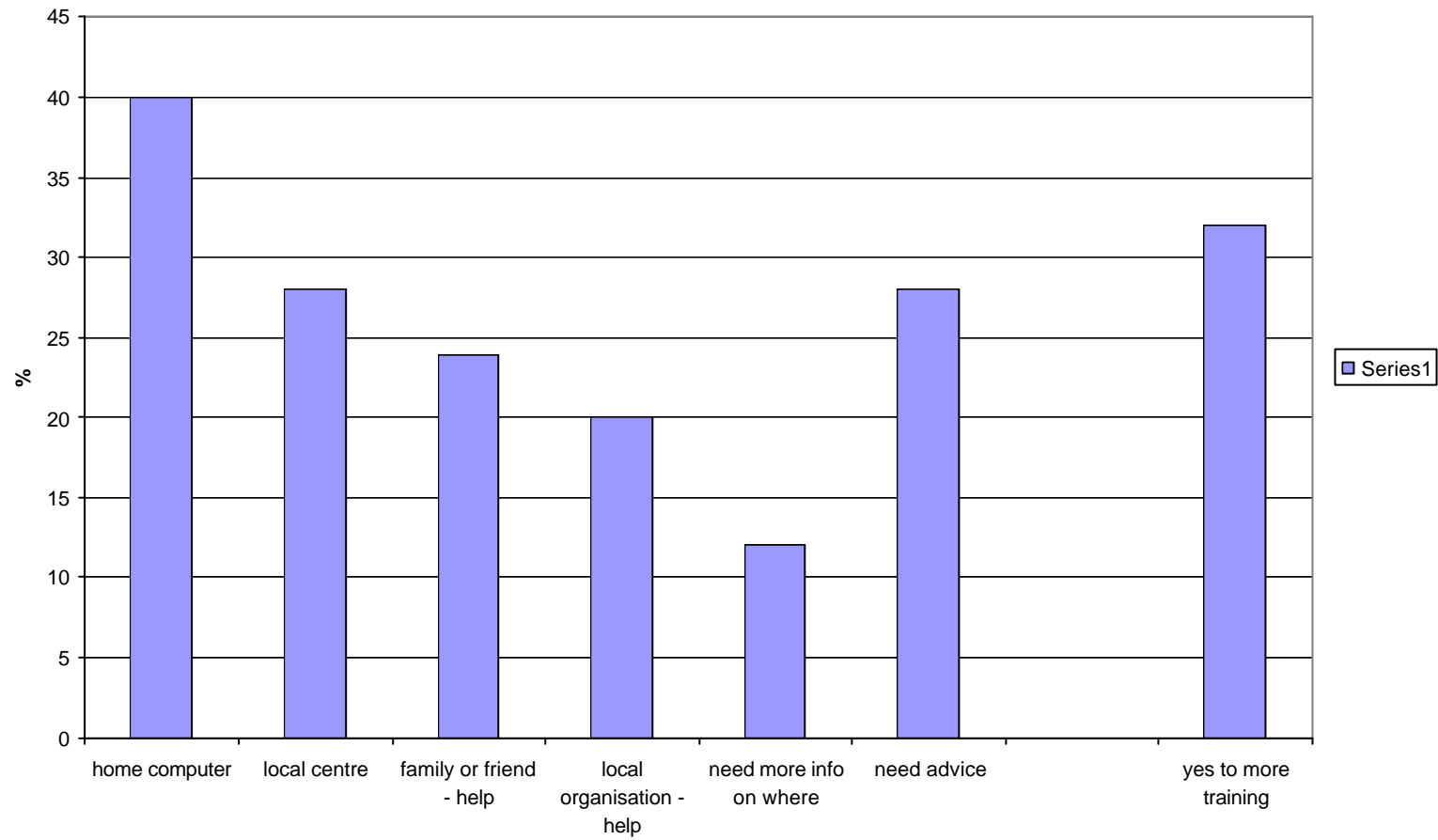


Table 3b: Getting access to the web and more web-training



Getting a qualification or certificate (43 people)

