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A Survey of Discipline Knowledge and Generic Skills of RTPI Corporate Members

**Membership Education and Lifelong Learning Department
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Summary

- A survey of the RTPI's Corporate Members' discipline knowledge and generic professional skills was conducted in September 2005. The survey was sent by email to a total of 1200 Corporate Members randomly selected within four age groups. The four age groups were 21-30 year olds, 31-40 years olds, 41-50 year olds and 51 – 65 year olds. Each age group sampled consisted of 150 males and 150 females.
- The results show that the Members surveyed are highly skilled individuals, almost all with more than one specialism within Planning.
- There are clear gender and age differences in discipline strengths, as well as in areas needing further knowledge development.
- Members were also asked to identify their strengths and further training needs in 31 generic competencies which fall within *Egan Review* skills categories. There were again clear gender and age differences in strengths and training needs, e.g. in managerial and project management skills.
- Individuals at different stages in their careers have different skills needs at different levels. Therefore, learning providers must accommodate both beginners and advanced learners, in terms of updating discipline knowledge and 'soft skills'. In addition, lifelong learning resources should be relevant to the professional needs of Members and affordable.
- Members would like to see further expansion and enhancement of the lifelong learning resources currently available from the Institute and its partners. Members surveyed commented that there should be better coordination of events and conferences between RTPI Regions/Branches and RTPI partners to increase the variety and accessibility of events on offer.
- Members would like to see the Institute actively promote their profile as skilled professionals. In addition, they would like the Institute to impress on employers that continuing professional development is a membership obligation and that employers have a duty to facilitate lifelong learning of their workforce.

1) Introduction

The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities (ODPM, 2004, <http://www.odpm.gov.uk>) identified a number of professional skills as essential for the realisation of a set of common goals for the successful implementation of the Government's sustainability agenda. As Planners are important stakeholders in the delivery of this agenda, the RTPI's Membership Education and Lifelong Learning Department conducted a survey of skills of Corporate Members in September 2005.

The main objective of the survey was to identify those skills Corporate Members already possess and their specialisms within the discipline and to ascertain whether further skills development is necessary. In addition, the survey investigated the learning opportunities Members have at work and in their own time, the constraints they experience in complying with CPD requirements for membership and their preferred learning methods.

2) Survey design

The survey was sent by email to a total of 1200 Corporate Members randomly selected within four age groups. The four age groups were 21-30 year olds, 31-40 years olds, 41-50 year olds and 51 – 65 year olds. Each age group sampled consisted of 150 males and 150 females. Of the members contacted, some did not receive the survey because of outdated email addresses. However, 323 responses (165 from females and 158 from males) were received by the deadline and were included in the analysis.

The survey was designed to identify Members' specialisms and particular strengths and areas needing further development within the discipline. Members were also requested to identify strengths and areas for further development within generic skills that fall into 12 broad categories of skills identified by the *Egan Review*. In addition, the survey also identified learning routes adopted by Members for CPD and lifelong learning, barriers they encounter to lifelong learning and their preferred learning media.

3) Results

(a) Specialisation within sub-disciplines

The members surveyed specialise in a variety of sub-disciplines within planning, with the vast majority specialising in more than one area. There are some interesting differences between males and females in their specialisms (Table 1) which become more apparent when age is taken into account. For example, significantly more men than women seem to specialise in housing, regeneration, transport and urban design, whereas significantly more women than men seem to specialise in community planning. These differences are more emphasised with age for some sub-disciplines; for instance, while males and females in the 21-30 year age group specialise equally in urban design (32% vs 29% respectively), in the over 51 year age group three times as many males specialise in this area as females (39% vs 13% respectively). This trend is also seen for development control, with males and females in the 21-30 year age group specialising equally in this area (59% for both genders), while there is clear male domination of development control among the over 51 year olds (70% of males compared to 55% of females).

Interestingly, some sub-disciplines such as conservation of the built and natural environments and rural planning seem to be more popular with women than with men in the 21-30 year age group (44% of females vs 17% of males, 23% vs 7% and 44% vs 17% respectively), while more men among the over 51 year olds specialise in these areas than women (58% of males vs 32% of females, 48% vs 34%, 39% vs 34% respectively).

Table 1: Male and female Members' specialisms within the discipline.

Discipline area	% of males stating this area as a specialism	% of females stating this area as a specialism
Community planning	23	30
Conservation – built environment	31	30
Conservation – natural environment	25	24
Development control	58	53
Economic development	29	21
Education	15	10
Enforcement	24	16
Environmental planning	41	30
Housing	50	37
Minerals	10	8
Regeneration	49	39
Rural planning	33	35
Sustainable development	53	48
Tourism	19	14
Town centre management	11	10
Transport	27	12
Urban design	32	20
Waste	13	8
Other, e.g. retail planning, commercial planning, etc.	29	31

(b) Strengths and further development of skills within the discipline

All members surveyed

Only 54% percent of all Members surveyed claimed knowledge of the field as a whole as a strength (see Figure 1). The discipline areas that most Members identified as strengths were development and local planning (63% of the Members surveyed), development control (58%), sustainable development (55%), design awareness and appreciation (51%) and policy-making (51%). The discipline areas that fewest Members identified as strengths were town centre management (13% of the Members surveyed), waste (11%), planning education (10%) and minerals (9%; see Table 1)). This is probably because fewer Members specialised in these areas, e.g. only 9% of the Members surveyed specialised in minerals compared to 51% specialising in sustainable development (results not shown).

The discipline areas in which most Members desired further development of their knowledge were sustainable development (67% of the Members surveyed), design awareness and appreciation (62%), urban design (62%), planning law (60%), regeneration (56%) and development planning (53%; see Figure 1).

Gender and age differences in discipline competence

Apart from three sub-disciplines, all others were identified as strengths more by men than by women (Figure 2). Only community planning, conservation of the natural environment and rural planning were identified as strengths more by women, possibly because more women are specialising in these areas. There is also the possibility that women are more modest or cautious than men in identifying their strong points!

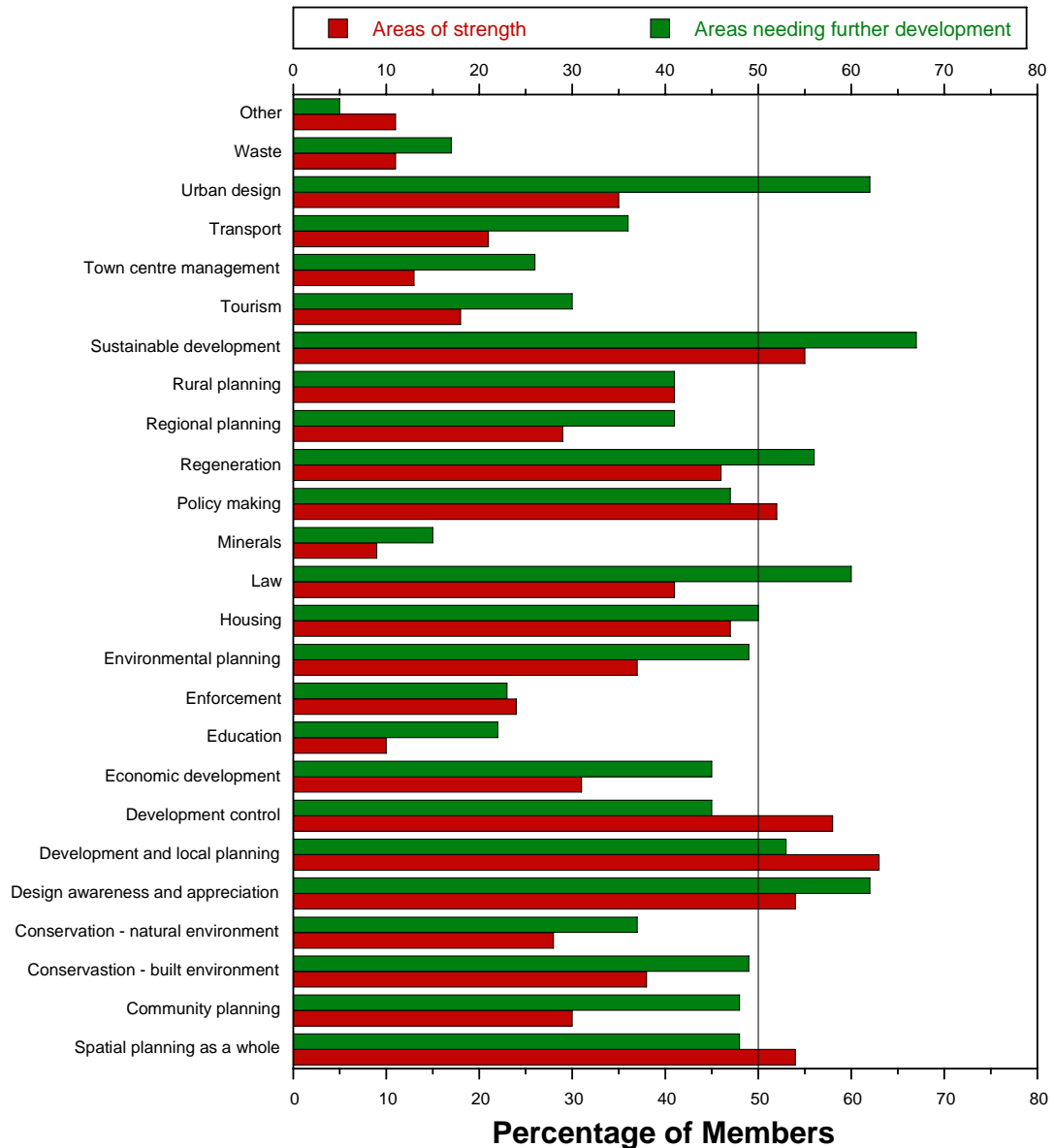


Figure 1: The percentage of all Corporate Members surveyed identifying knowledge of each sub-discipline as a strength and the percentage desiring further development of knowledge in each sub-discipline.

There are also gender differences in the discipline areas identified as needing further development. For example, more men desired further enhancement of knowledge in economic development, enforcement, regional planning, transport and urban design, whereas more women identified community planning, conservation of the built and natural environment and environmental planning as areas for further development (Figure 2). This is broadly in line with their specialisms; Members appear to want advanced skills development in their own areas of specialisation.

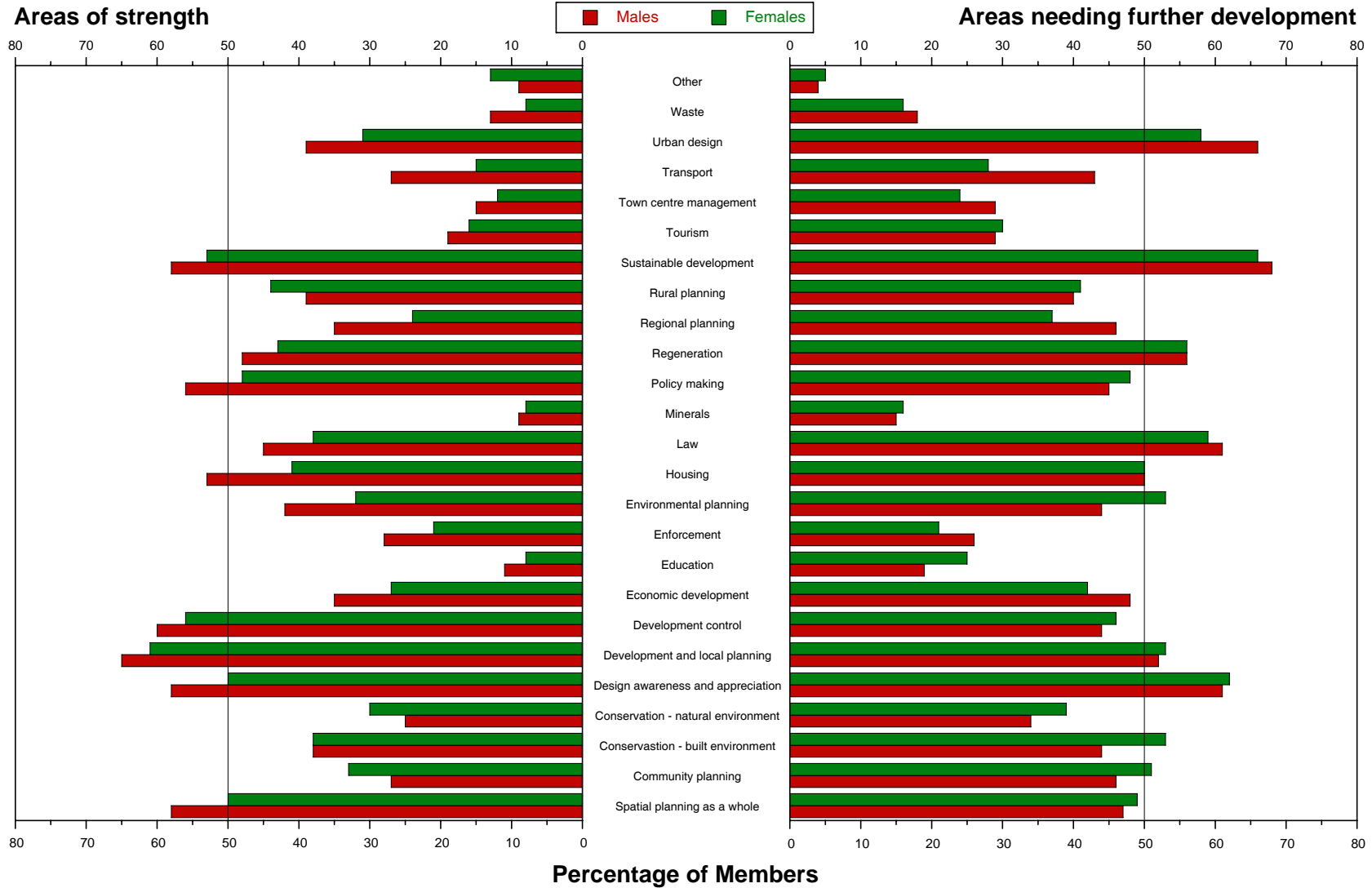


Figure 2: The percentage of all male and female Corporate Members surveyed identifying each sub-discipline as a strength and the percentage desiring further development in each sub-discipline.

There are some clear age differences in discipline strengths, with more older Members, those 41 years or older, identifying spatial planning as a whole, community planning, conservation of the built and natural environment, education, enforcement, environmental planning, policy making and waste as sub-discipline strengths than younger members. Younger members on the other hand do not appear to have any clear skills advantages over older members (Figure 3).

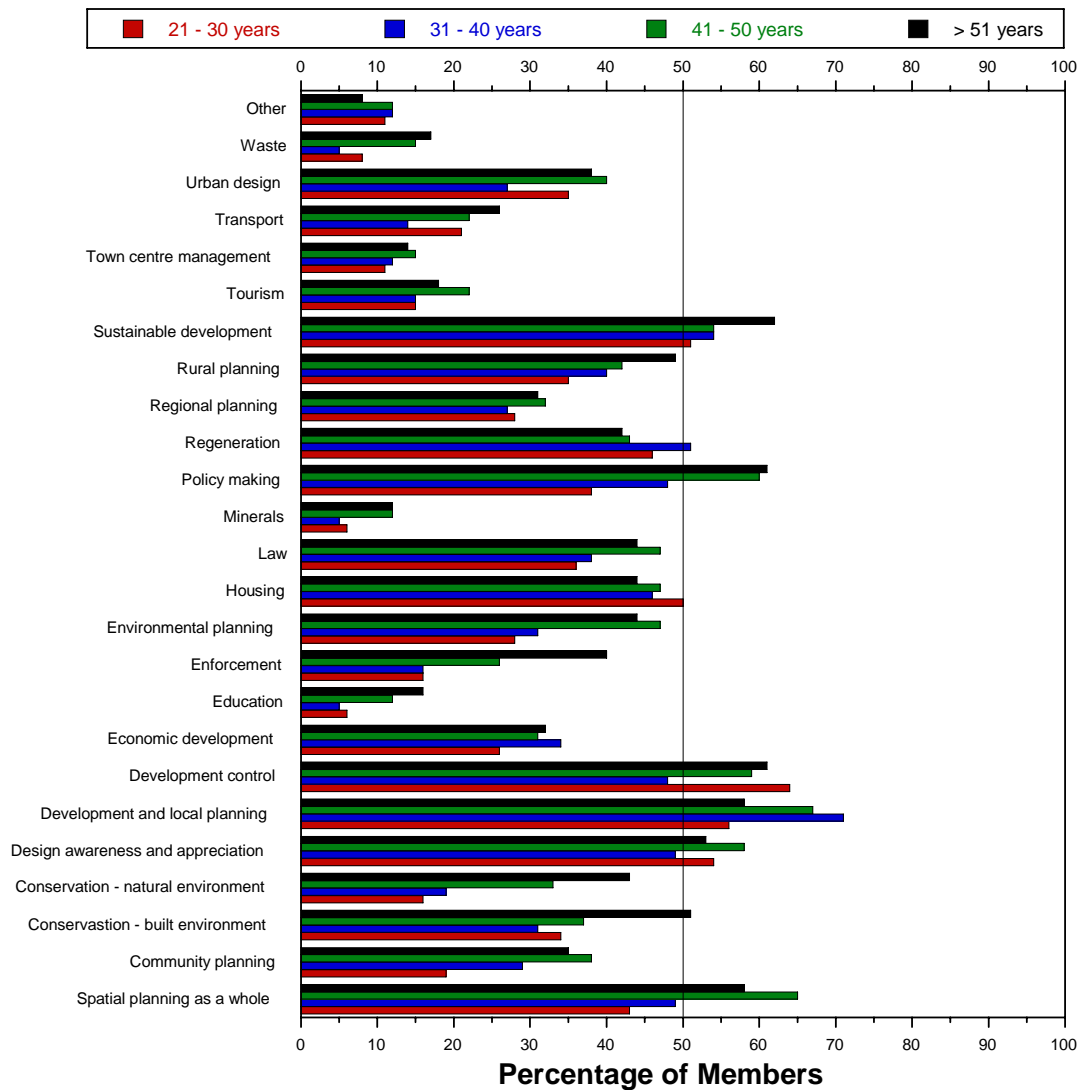


Figure 3: The percentage of Corporate Members in different age groups identifying knowledge of each sub-discipline as a strength.

In terms of further enhancement of discipline knowledge, development control, environmental planning, town centre management and urban design are identified more by younger members, especially those under the age of 30 years, as areas needing development. Older members on the other hand identified policy making and sustainable development as areas for further improvement (see Figure 4).

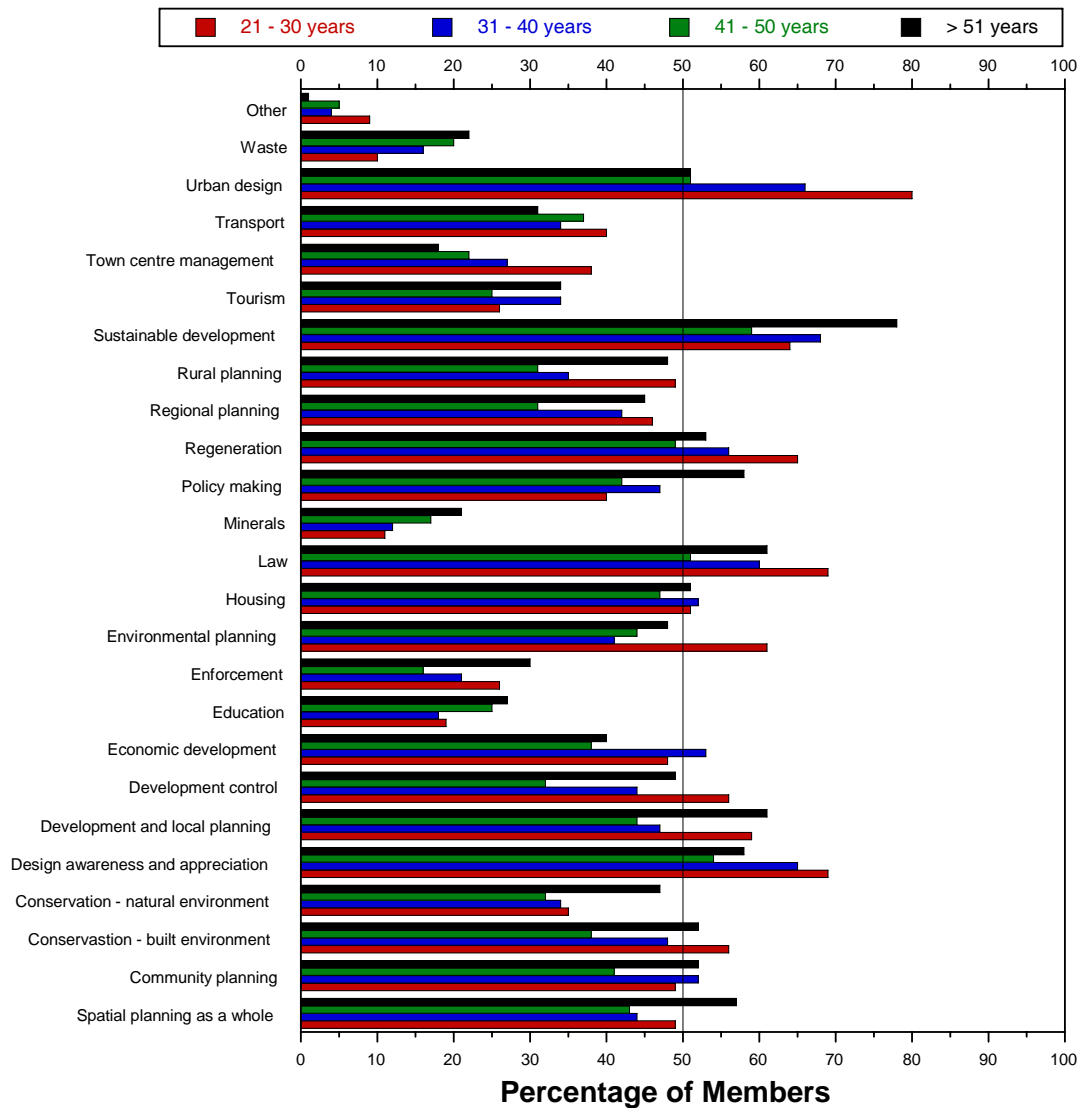


Figure 4: The percentage of Corporate Members in different age groups identifying knowledge of each sub-discipline as needing further enhancement.

(c) Strengths and further development of generic skills

The *Egan Review* identified 13 broad categories of skills, of which this survey looked at 12 in some detail (see Table 2). The *Egan Review* addressed the importance of developing generic skills and behaviour for successful delivery of the sustainable communities agenda. The *Review* emphasised the importance of leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills for engaging the community, with skills critical for managing complex projects identified as foundational. These latter skills include a ‘can do’ approach, being open to change, challenging assumptions and creativity. Some of these skills, e.g. creativity, are rather nebulous and are difficult to identify or assess in a quantitative survey. However, the survey attempted to identify as many skills as possible that would encompass the broad categories identified by the *Egan Review*, together with other skills that are essential for the professional development and career progression of our Members.

Table 2: The generic professional skills investigated in the survey of RTPI Members are assigned to 12 broad categories of generic skills identified by *The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities* (2004).

Generic skills identified by the Egan Review	Skills investigated in the survey
(1) Project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management • Team building
(2) Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and motivation • Delegation • Coaching • Mentoring • Staff appraisal • Staff development • Staff management
(3) Breakthrough thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic thinking
(4) Team/partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work • Committee skills
(5) Making it happen given constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving • Organisational ability • Time management
(6) Process/change management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change management
(7) Financial management and appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial appraisal • Budgeting
(8) Stakeholder management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community involvement • Interdisciplinary working
(9) Analysis, decision making and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numeracy • Analytical/research skills • Data analysis
(10) Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public speaking • Telephone skills • Writing skills – general, e.g. reports • Writing skills – specific, e.g. press releases
(11) Conflict resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertiveness • Mediation • Negotiation
(12) Customer awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer care

All members surveyed

Of the 31 skills that fall within the *Egan Review* categories, only four, i.e. staff appraisal, change management, financial appraisal and budgeting, were identified as strengths by fewer than 50% of the Members surveyed (see Figure 5). Financial appraisal and budgeting, both of which are financial management skills identified as essential and foundational by *The Egan Review*, are of particular concern as only 34% and 42% of Members respectively identified these as strengths.

The generic skills that most members wished to further develop were project management (62% of the Members surveyed), public speaking/presentational skills (60%), leadership and motivation (59%), financial appraisal (55%), budgeting (54%), community involvement (54%), strategic thinking (52%) and change management (51%; see Figure 5).

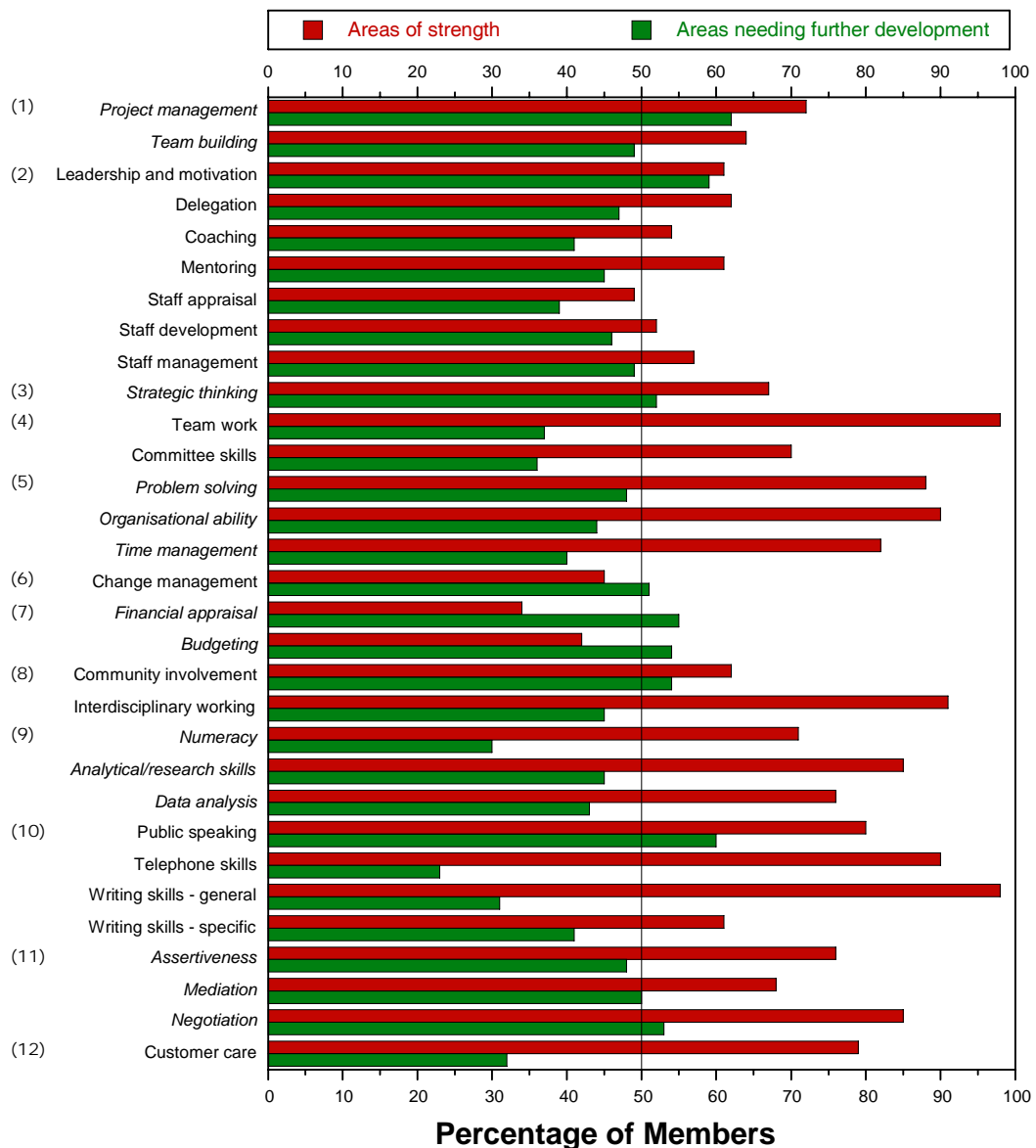


Figure 5: The percentage of all Members identifying each generic professional skill as a strength and the percentage identifying each skill as needing further development. The skills presented above fall within 12 broad categories of skills (numbered in the figure) identified by the Egan Review (see Table 2).

Gender and age differences in generic skills

At least 50% of the women and men surveyed claimed most of the 31 generic skills as strengths (Figure 6). However, significantly more men claimed 15 of the skills as strengths than women, i.e. project management (1), delegation (2), coaching (2), mentoring (2), staff management (2), team work (4), problem solving (5), change management (6), financial appraisal (7), budgeting (7), numeracy (9), analytical/research skills (9), public speaking (10), assertiveness (11) and mediation (11; the number after each skill refers to the Egan Review category; see Table 2).

Project management, leadership and motivation (2), financial appraisal, budgeting, public speaking and negotiation were identified by more than 50% of males and females as skills needing enhancement. Significantly more women acknowledged project management, staff appraisal and public speaking as areas for further development (68% of women vs 55% of men, 44% vs 34% and 67% vs 53%; see Figure 6).

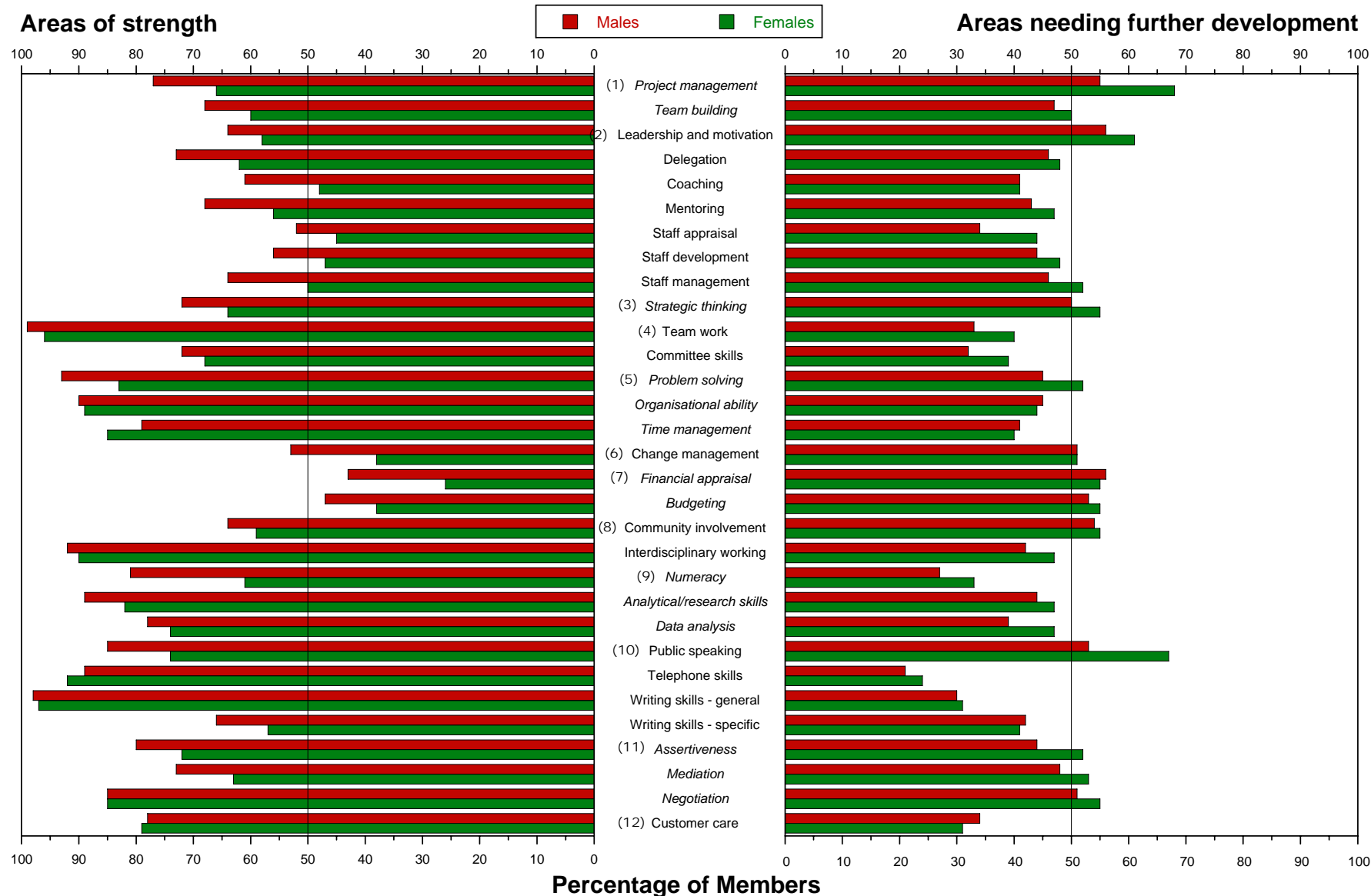


Figure 6: The percentage of all male and female Corporate Members surveyed identifying each generic professional skill as a strength and the percentage desiring further enhancement of each skill. The skills presented above fall within 12 broad categories of skills (numbered in the figure) identified by the Egan Review (see Table 2).

Similar to the trends for discipline areas, there are again clear age differences in generic skills identified as strengths. Not surprisingly, all skills within the categories of project management (1), leadership (2), process/change management (6), financial management (7) and stakeholder management (8) were identified far more by older Members as strengths (Figure 7). It is reasonable to assume that these are skills that professionals acquire over time with greater experience and professional advancement.

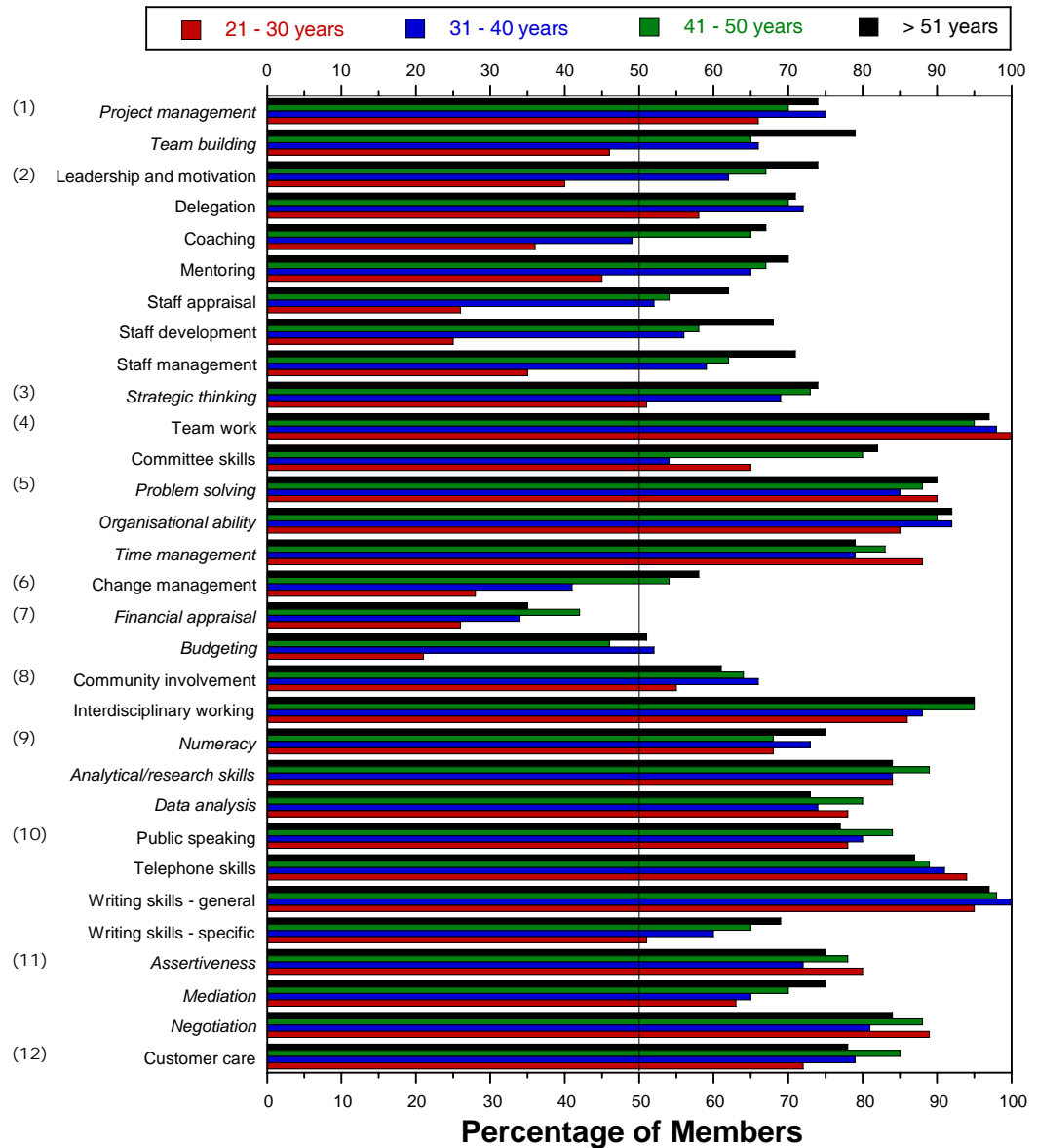


Figure 7: The percentage of Corporate Members in different age groups identifying each generic professional skill as a strength. The skills presented above fall within 12 broad categories of skills (numbered in the figure) identified by the Egan Review (see Table 2).

Conversely, far more younger Members acknowledged that they needed development of skills in project management, leadership, financial management and conflict resolution (11) than older Members (see Figure 8). On the other hand, Members of all age groups desired skills enhancement in process/change management, stakeholder management and communication.

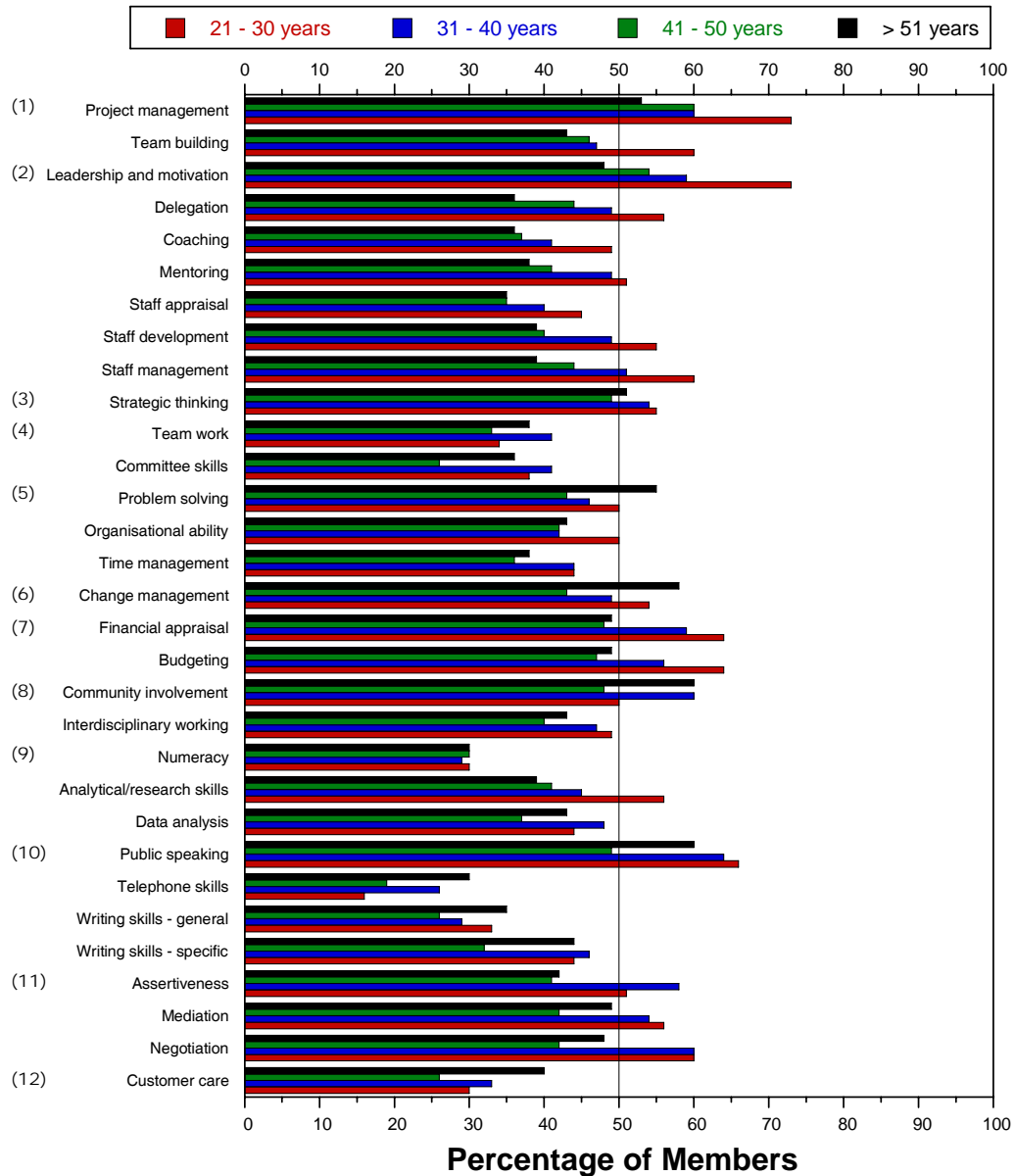


Figure 8: The percentage of Corporate Members in different age groups identifying each generic professional skill as requiring further enhancement. The skills presented above fall within 12 broad categories of skills (numbered in the figure) identified by the Egan Review (see Table 2)

(d) Strengths and further development of technical skills

Members were also asked to identify their skills in a number of technical areas such as GIS, devising and interpreting plans and basic and specialist information technology (IT). Specialist IT skills included knowledge of software packages such as UNI-form, ArchView and SUSPAC.

There are gender differences in strength within these technical skills (Figure 9). Males were far more likely to identify knowledge of GIS, the making and interpreting of plans and specialist IT skills as strengths than women, whereas women were far more likely to desire further enhancement of knowledge in these areas (as well as in basic IT skills) than men. However, both men and women clearly would like to gain further skills in using specialised tools for spatial interpretation (GIS and ArchView) and other database tools such as UNI-form (51% and 40% of the Members surveyed would like further skills development in GIS and specialist software respectively). Gender differences in skills strength were far greater in older age groups, e.g. males and females in the 21-30 year age group were equally likely to identify knowledge of GIS as a strength (50% females vs 54% males), whereas nearly twice as many men in the 31-40 year age group identified GIS as a strength than women in this group (62% of males vs 37% of females).

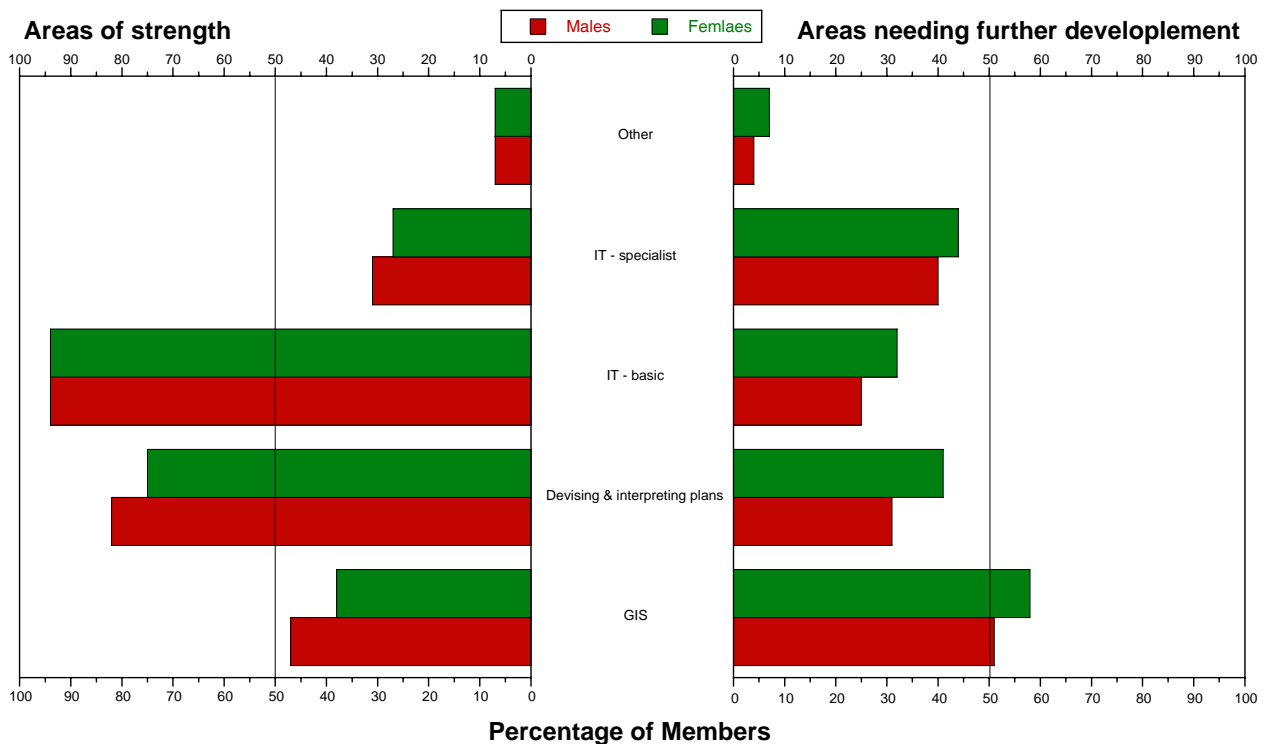


Figure 9: The percentage of males and females identifying different technical skills as strengths and the percentage identifying each of these skills as needing further enhancement.

Although Members of all age classes appear to be equally competent in devising and interpreting plans and basic IT skills, younger Members were far more likely to identify knowledge of GIS and specialist IT skills as strengths (Figure 10). For example, over three times as many 21-30 years olds identified knowledge of specialist IT skills as a strength than over 51 year olds (43% vs 13%). Despite these differences, Members of all ages appear to be equally interested in enhancing their specialist technical skills. Given the number of younger Members claiming these areas as strengths, provision of further training for these Members should be at an advanced level.

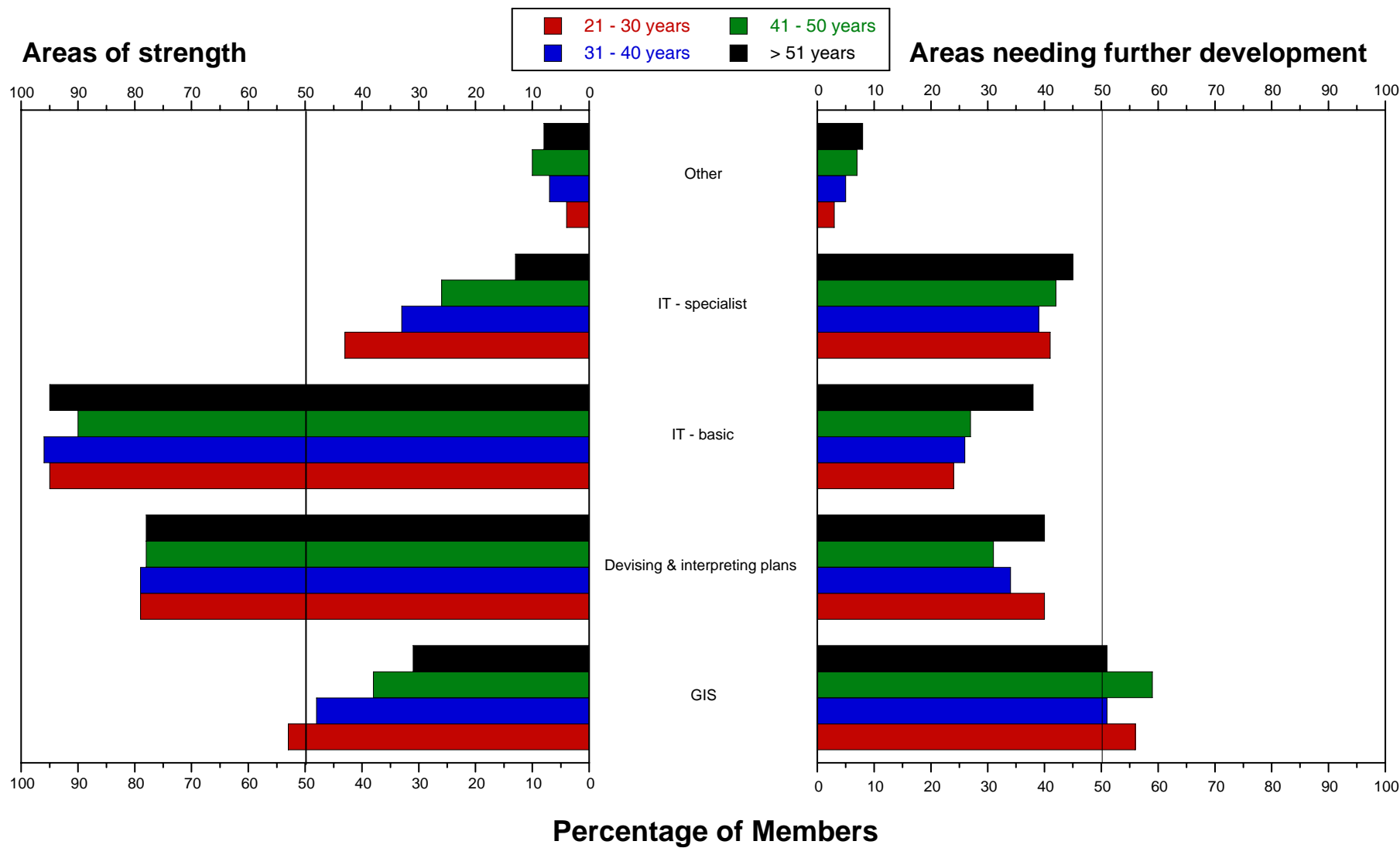


Figure 10: The percentage of Members in different age groups identifying each technical skill as a strength and the percentage identifying each technical skill as requiring further development.

(e) Skills development in other areas

Members were asked to identify other areas not specifically alluded to in the survey within which they would like further skills enhancement. Table 3 provides a list of such skills.

Table 3: Discipline, technical, managerial and other skills not specified in the survey that members would like to further develop.

Discipline knowledge	Technical skills	Managerial/finance skills
<p>Environment/sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural appraisal • Agricultural diversification • Climate change • Environmental education • Environmental impact assessment • Flood risk & drainage • Sustainability appraisal • Water environment <p>Planning law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property law <p>Regeneration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood renewal <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer routes to school • Sustainable transport 	<p>General software</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access • PowerPoint <p>Specialist software</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auto CAD • 3D visualisation <p>Web skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Planning • Web design <p>Other skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural skills • Construction knowledge • Land surveying • Languages, European • Monitoring techniques • Research skills • Understanding section drawings 	<p>Finance skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development finance • Preparing tenders <p>Managerial skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership brokering • Pastoral care • Recruitment/interviewing • Recruitment – equal opportunities

(f) Lifelong learning and continuing professional development

Opportunities for lifelong learning

Members were asked to identify what opportunities they had for lifelong learning and CPD. The majority of Members had access to in-house staff development opportunities or enrolled in courses or other CPD training events paid for by their employers (83% and 85% respectively). A sizeable proportion of the Members surveyed used self-development resources such as online media (62% of members) and their own funds to pay for courses and other external learning resources (47%). On the other hand, about 10% of the Members surveyed claimed that they did not have any opportunities for lifelong learning at work.

Although there are no gender differences in learning opportunities made use of by Members for CPD, there are some age differences (Figure 11). Members in younger age groups appear to use in-house staff development and employer-paid opportunities more frequently than older Members, whereas the latter appear to self-fund their training far more frequently than the former. This

implies that the Institute and training providers should be aware of cost implications for Members, particularly for younger Members at the start of their careers, of fulfilling their CPD obligations and that training opportunities should be affordable to *all* Members.

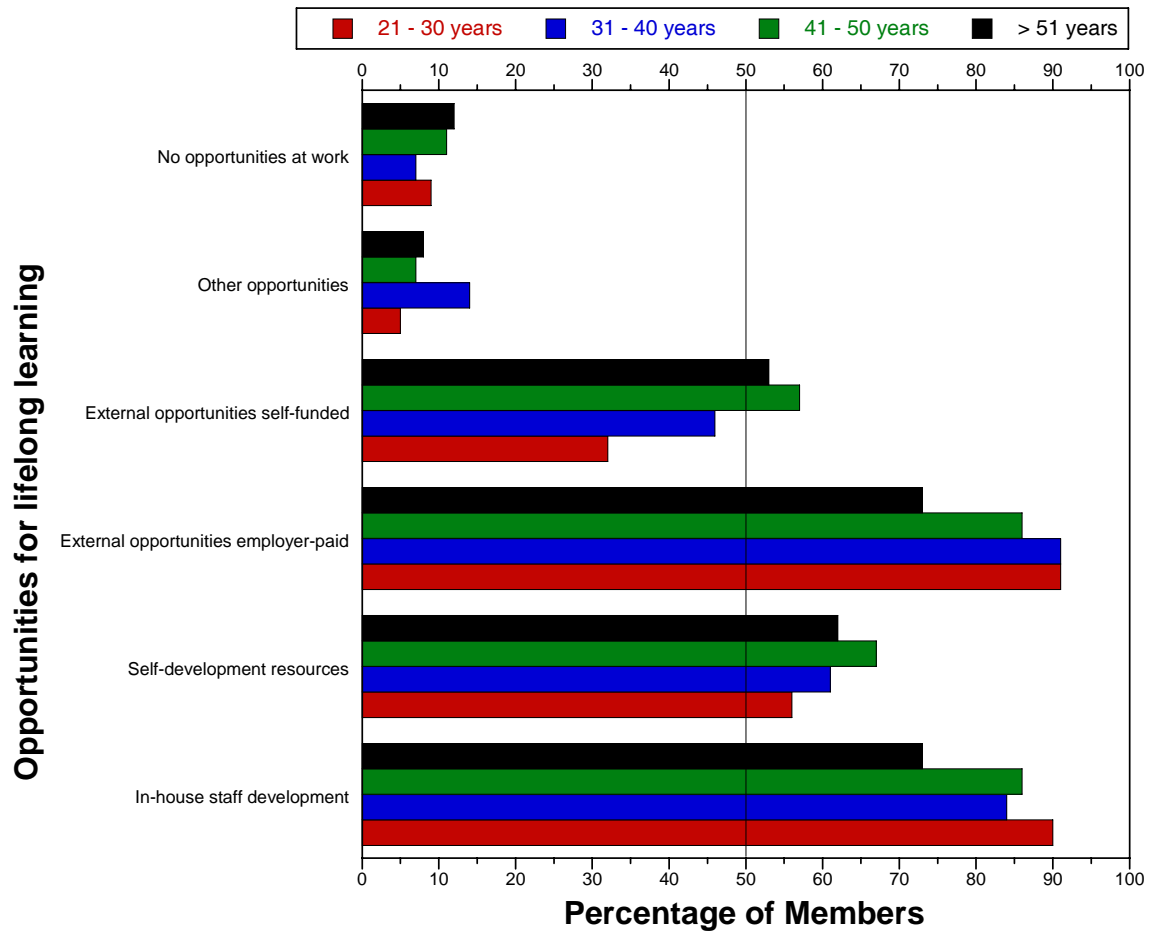


Figure 11: Training opportunities made use of by Members within different age groups. These included in-house staff development opportunities, self-development resources such as online media and external courses/events paid for by the employer.

The results also indicate some differences between public and private sector employees in the learning opportunities they used for CPD. This implies that there may be disparities in the provision of learning opportunities between sectors. Specifically, more local government employees used in-house staff development events and opportunities funded by their employers for CPD than private sector employees (92% of local government employees vs 79% of private sector employees and 94% vs 87% respectively). On the other hand, more private sector employees used self-development resources such as online media than local government employees (72% vs 58%).

Barriers to lifelong learning

Members were asked to estimate how many hours on average they spent on learning activities during a month. The majority of Members (41%) spent between 3-5 hours a month while about 17% devoted more than 11 hours per month to CPD. However, about 15% of the Members surveyed may be barely able to fulfil the Institute’s CPD obligation (50 hours within a two-year

period) as they were able to devote fewer than 2 hours a month to learning activities. Finding the time to fulfil the Institute’s CPD obligation may be particularly difficult for Members between 31 to 50 years of age (Figure 12).

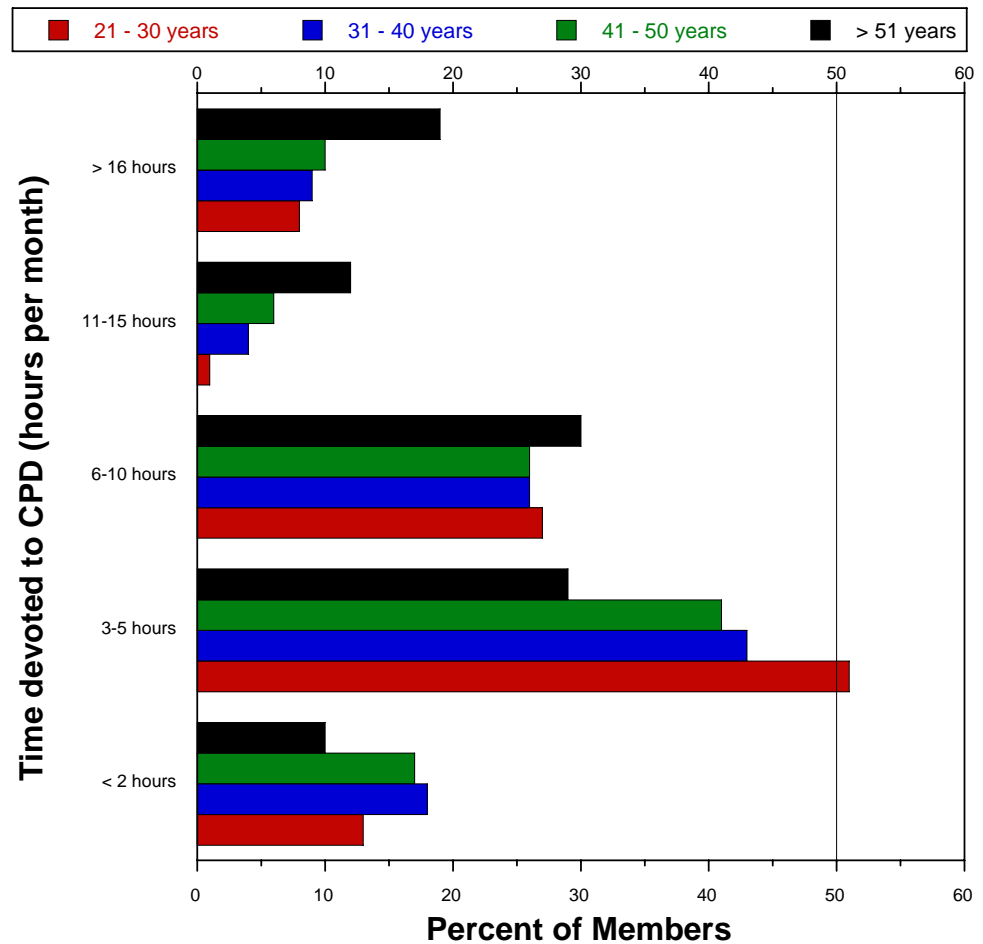


Figure 12: The amount of time per month spent on lifelong learning activities by Members of different ages.

Members encountered a number of barriers to lifelong learning, the most frequently cited being lack of time and a heavy work load (45% and 30% of the Members respectively). Family commitments were also important, with 23% of all Members, 26% of women (compared to 19% of men) and 46% of part-time employees (compared to 20% of full-time employees) citing this as a reason. Financial reasons were also cited by about 9% of the Members. There were also some age differences, of particular note being family commitments cited more frequently by the 31-40 and 41-50 year age groups than the other two age groups (Figure 13). This is likely to be the reason why significant numbers of Members in these two age groups were not able to allocate more than 2 hours a month to CPD.

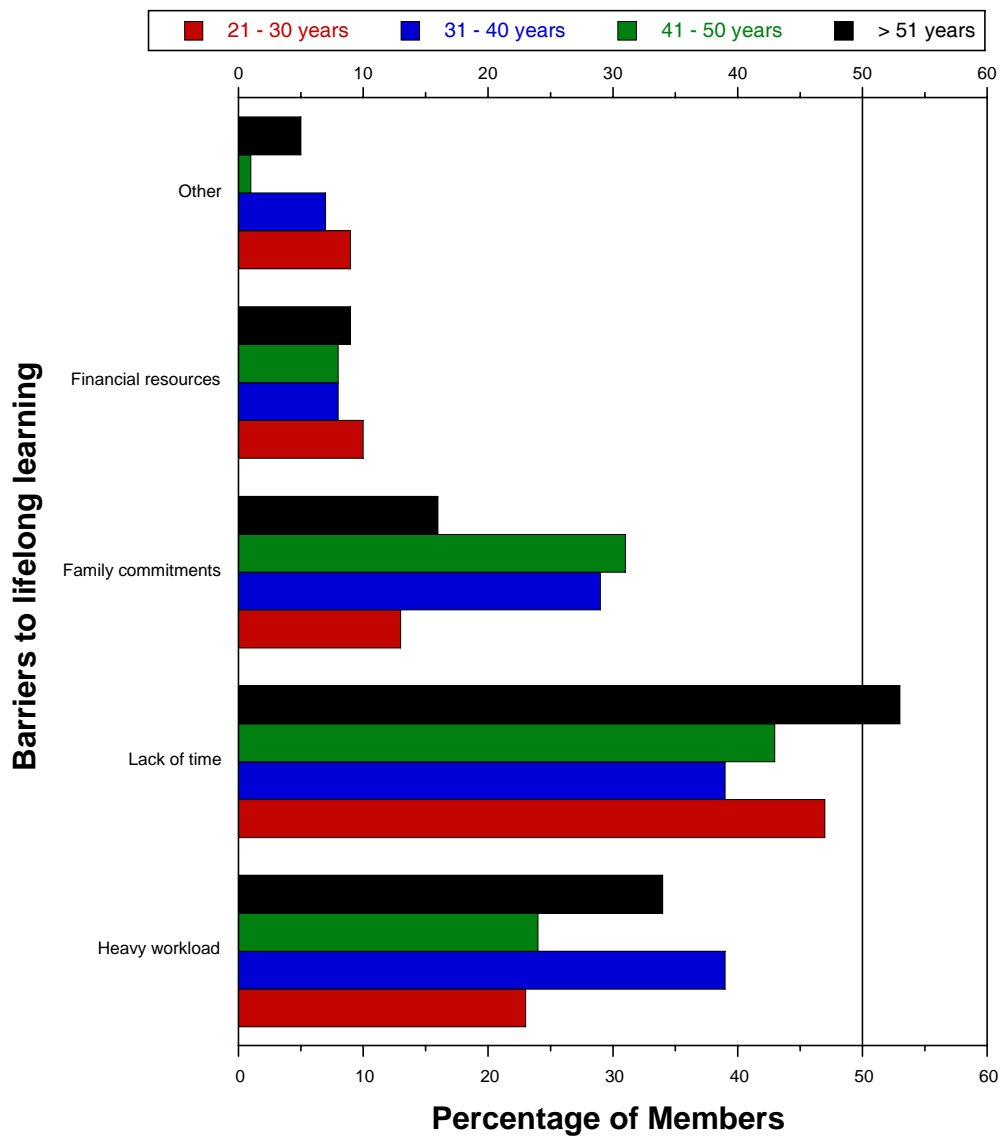


Figure 13: Barriers to lifelong learning encountered by Members of different ages.

Preferred learning methods

Members were asked to identify their preferred methods of learning, which included a variety of modes in addition to conferences and online resources currently on offer from the Institute’s partners. By far the most popular were conferences, daytime workshops/events and books and other printed matter (Figure 14). Evening workshops were not particularly popular with the younger age groups (only 30% of 21-30 years olds chose this methods compared to 65% of the over 51 age group) and with the part-time employed (35% of part-time employees chose this compared to 49% of full-time employees). Higher education courses involving a long time commitment, e.g. those leading to a degree or diploma, were also chosen by fewer part-time than full-time employees. More women chose online resources, evening workshops, short or distance learning courses than men (results not shown).

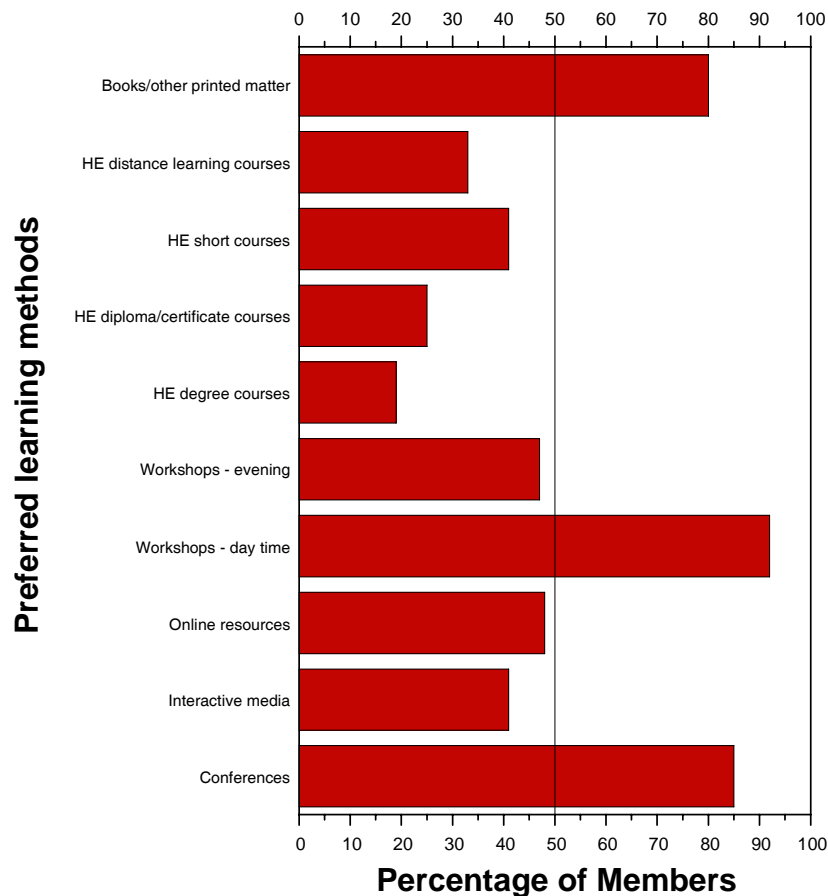


Figure 14: Methods of learning chosen by all Members surveyed. These include interactive media such as CD ROMs and courses involving different time commitments offered by higher education institutions.

4) Implications for the provision of lifelong learning opportunities

(a) Breadth versus depth of skills

The survey results show that while our Members have numerous specialisms within the discipline and are multi-skilled, and therefore, could conceivably demonstrate breadth of discipline knowledge, there is a critical need for development of skills at an advanced level. Members appear to desire further skill development in the areas that they have identified as strengths, e.g. in sustainable development and design awareness and appreciation. Sustainable development, urban design and planning law also scored highly in both the 1997 and 2001 surveys undertaken by the Institute as areas requiring further training (Member Survey 2001: *How can the RTPI deliver its new vision for planning?*). The continuing interest in enhancing knowledge of planning law probably reflects the evolving nature of law and the need for Members to continuously update their competence in this area.

This survey provides a more detailed look at our Members' 'soft skills' strengths and needs than the previous two surveys and shows that generic skills need developing in breadth as well as in depth. Relatively few of our Members appear to be confident about their financial, change and stakeholder management skills and, depending on career stage, will need support at both introductory and advanced levels from the Institute and other training providers. This is particularly

vital for female and/or younger Members. Both groups appear to need skill enhancement within other *Egan Review* categories as well as those identified for all Members, e.g. in project management, leadership and conflict resolution at both introductory and advanced levels.

The Institute, its partners and other learning providers need to accommodate learning needs of individuals at different stages in their careers: this involves offering a programme of learning opportunities for planners with different levels of skills - for both beginners and advanced learners - to facilitate the updating of their discipline knowledge and 'soft skills'.

(b) Relevance and responsiveness of lifelong learning resources

The Institute and its partners need to consider at all stages of provision of lifelong learning opportunities how relevant they are to Members from a variety of backgrounds. A common belief among Members in the private sector appears to be that learning opportunities are based broadly on the needs of public sector employees. This may simply be a problem of perception. However, some Members have commented that training opportunities provided by the Institute should dovetail more precisely with the training needs identified as relevant by employers. This in turn requires building closer relationships with employers that value and support lifelong learning of their staff. However, while building bridges, the Institute needs to consider whether meeting training needs identified by employers is the same as meeting the needs of our membership.

Members also frequently commented on the lack of variety of lifelong learning opportunities offered by the Institute's partners. Poor responsiveness to national and global planning agendas was also a concern. For example, Members would also like to see the Institute address the needs of the devolved administrations with more regional activities catering to regional agendas which they felt the current conference programme did not meet adequately.

Some seminars given by planning consultants (who are RTPI members) may only target a narrow group of people, usually the providers' client base and it has been suggested that such events should be more clearly identified as to whether or not fulfilling the CPD obligation. It is not clear from comments whether these external opportunities were provided under the banner of the Institute

(c) Coordination and accessibility

Members have commented that there is poor national coordination of lifelong learning opportunities, with national events often repeating regional events. Members also appear to feel that RTPI events and conferences are too 'London-centric'. Training opportunities should be more evenly distributed outside of the metropolitan area, in large regional centres such as Manchester and Birmingham. Training events organised in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should focus more on each nation's own particular planning agendas and the planning environment.

(d) Dissemination of information

Members commented that there is poor publicity about CPD opportunities provided by the Institute. They would like to see a calendar of events published early in the year and regularly updated e-bulletins. The website should be updated regularly and should include an online catalogue of courses, workshops and other events by subject. Such a catalogue should also include information about degree, certificate short and/or distance learning courses offered by our partner universities.

(e) Affordability of training opportunities

Some Members commented that the Institutes should ensure that training opportunities are affordable especially to young planners if they are to be fully engaged with the Institute's lifelong learning ethos from the outset of their careers. This is important since about 9% of the Members surveyed (which extrapolates to more than 1300 Corporate Members for the entire membership) cited financial reasons as barriers to lifelong learning. About 47% of the Members surveyed (which extrapolates to over 7000 Corporate Members for the entire membership) used their own funds to pay for training. Therefore, the Institute and its partners need to consider providing a programme of opportunities, particularly online, that are cost effective and more affordable to Members.

5) The role of the Institute's partners in the provision of training opportunities

The sections below present a summary of Members' views of the specific learning opportunities offered by partners and should be considered in the context of the implications discussed above.

(a) Conferences and workshops

Over 95% of the Members surveyed were aware of the RTPI conference programme. Many commented that while they would like to see the conferences continue, they should increase in number and range. Members would like more opportunities for feedback during conferences, and additional workshops after plenary sessions were seen as a good way to support further learning. In terms of skills addressed by conferences, Members would like to see a greater focus on 'how to' themes and soft skills.

Accessibility, in terms of cost and location, were a concern and there were suggestions to introduce reduced fees to younger planners. It was also reminded that conference providers need to be more accommodating to people with disabilities.

Some Members felt that there is a greater need for workshops/seminars which enable better participation and debate than for conferences. Day-time seminars were identified as a preferred method by 92% of the Members surveyed. Providers should consider the possibility of offering series of workshops tackling particular subjects or skills which would enable participants to gain a more in-depth knowledge of these areas. It was also suggested that seminars or workshops should bring together a range of professionals in order to encourage partnership working and sharing of knowledge.

(b) *PlanningMatters*

Although the vast majority of the Members surveyed were aware of RTPI conferences, the exposure of *PlanningMatters* was much less (only 68% of the Members were aware of this resource). Even some Members who used the resource were not aware that their employers could subscribe to a licence and, therefore, they themselves could access modules free of charge. Members who use the resource regularly have suggested ways in which *PlanningMatters* could be publicised, e.g. through *Planning* magazine and RTPI Regions/Branches and more high profile promotion at conferences. It was also suggested that new and existing modules should be featured periodically in the RTPI news section of *Planning* magazine, perhaps in response to a national event or news item.

Members commented that *PlanningMatters* is an important innovation and is of particular value to geographically isolated members for whom finding accessible means of CPD is difficult. They would like to see continued expansion of the resource with the addition of new modules. Relevance of modules is a concern, especially for Members in Scotland. Members were not able

to decide how relevant the modules were before paying for them, suggesting that a slightly more detailed summary would be useful (without giving away all the contents!).

(c) *Planning* magazine

Members would like to see *Planning* magazine providing a more tangible means of CPD and lifelong learning. For example, one suggestion is that guidance notes relating to new circulars and/or checklists or bullet points on emerging planning issues should be included within the magazine as detachable sections which could then be placed within a CPD folder. Another suggestion is that the magazine should have longer, more technical articles on key changes in planning. For example, a Member commented that there has not been an article that addresses all of the legal implication of the new Act with a timetable of when the changes come in to force. The magazine should also include book reviews to help identify reliable sources of information.

(d) Books and journals

Books and other printed matter were chosen by over 80% of the Members as a preferred method of lifelong learning. Some Members suggested that the Institute should negotiate favourable prices or rental deals from publishers of the more expensive study material.

It has been suggested that the journal *Planning Theory and Practice* should be more affordable and accessible (a free copy for every local authority!). This implies that Members may not be aware of the special reduced subscription rate of the journal; more publicity is needed.

(f) Courses

Members commented that there should be increased provision of short courses with improved choice on a national scale. These could take the form of series of in-depth workshops or modules organised with minimal disruption of the daily workload. Use of video or online resources were seen as facilitating learning when work pressures make it difficult to devote significant amounts of time to external training courses.

Members would like to see more courses tailored to the needs of professionals at a senior level or of those who work in the private sector. Members would also like courses designed for sub-disciplines such as minerals and waste, regeneration, enforcement and development control; current provision is too generalised to take into account the needs of professionals specialising in these areas. In addition to discipline areas, Members would like more courses in generic skills training, e.g. in financial appraisal, SWOT analysis and management skills.

Some Members were keen that short and distance learning courses, especially those in specialist subject areas, provided by higher education institutions should be accredited or approved by the Institute and should have clear routes of progression leading to recognisable qualifications. However, learning providers should ensure that such courses result in demonstrable improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in order to be valued by Members and their employers.

6) The role of the Institute

(a) Promoting the profile of Members

Some members believe that the Institute should do more to ensure that Members' skills and competencies as Chartered Town Planners are valued in the marketplace and by other professionals in cognate disciplines. This should involve closer collaboration with RIBA, RICS, ICE, etc as it could prove beneficial in terms of promoting exchange of ideas and greater understanding of the different professional approaches of these disciplines.

Members would also like to see the Institute work more closely with planning institutes in other countries, including the Commonwealth and EU members. This could involve in the first instance joint conferences and development of networks of Members and RTPI representatives in other major international cities to promote learning at a global scale. They would also like the Institute to consider setting up an exchange programme between Commonwealth and other EU countries in order to develop an understanding of national and international contexts of planning.

(b) Persuading employers of the value of lifelong learning

Employer indifference or inability to provide training appears to be one of the biggest barriers encountered by our Members and they would like to see the Institute taking a more interventionist role in promoting the benefits of lifelong learning to employers. A number of respondents to the survey commented that the Institute must impress on employers that CPD is a membership obligation and that employers have a duty to facilitate lifelong learning of their workforce, if only to recruit competent staff and to promote staff retention.

Members suggested that the Institute should take on a stronger role in compelling employers to provide access to training. This should include setting a more strongly-enforced minimum annual CPD requirement for all RTPI Members (there is currently a minimum 50-hour requirement within a two year period). Members felt that this should encourage employers to provide adequate access to training.

Local authority employees were concerned that there are pressures on training budgets, and consequently, they were not always able to take part in CPD events. They would like to see the Institute actively lobby to protect and enhance training funds. Local authorities do not appear to allow time off during working hours for updating discipline knowledge and Members feel that they often have to react to events when it becomes essential rather than synthesising information across a wide range of policy issues and, therefore, gaining a more comprehensive view. One Member went so far as to say that local authorities must recognise that 'it is not all about answering phone calls and reading plans'.

(c) Rethinking CPD

Members would like the Institute to review the current CPD requirements, including identifying a set of technical competencies which all planners should have. Once this is done, the Institute should initiate a programme of conferences, workshops and courses related to the competencies and a more formalised medium, i.e. a log book or portfolio, in which to record and track each Member's progress in these competencies. This is very similar to the requirements of the Assessment of Professional Competence and implies that established Members would also benefit from a similar programme.

It was also suggested that the Institute should engage in more regular assessment of Members' CPD and introduce a scheme of certification for recognising successful completion of required hours of training within a given period or completion of training in specific skills sets. The

respondent who suggested this also thought that Members should submit this certification or record every year when subscriptions are renewed.

(d) Spreading the word about planning and guiding good practice

Members believe that the Institute has a critical role in being the conduit for disseminating information on cutting edge research and thinking in planning policy. Members may not have the time or resources to piece together the disparate elements of a complex discipline and they see the Institute's role as synthesising and helping make sense of a fast-moving field. According to one Member, 'we know the information is out there; we just don't have the time to seek it out ... and make sense of it. It's precisely this kind of work that members want the RTPI to do for them'.

Members feel that there is little useful practical information and good practice guidance available from the Institute at the moment. They would like to see regular updates on basic changes to planning law, with guidance and best practice examples to help understand and implement the new planning system. Members feel that the learning materials that the RTPI has produced hitherto are hard to find and are difficult and time-consuming to download. They suggest a regularly-updated bibliography of articles/publications on different subjects available as a resource from the RTPI Library.

One suggestion was for the Institute to appoint a trainer to instruct Members on major initiatives, e.g. better engagement in community planning, community involvement, etc. The trainer should visit each RTPI region to deliver sessions on a topic, thereby ensuring that all Members have the chance to engage in a similar standard of learning.

(e) Engaging Members in the lifelong learning ethos through RTPI Regions

Members view their RTPI Regions as their main links with the Institute and as important providers of lifelong learning opportunities. However, they feel that what the Regions have to offer at the moment is of variable quality, e.g. some Branches/Regions were singled out by Members responding to the survey as offering high quality training opportunities while others were mentioned as providing inadequate resources. Members also believe that Branch newsletters could be used as a means of providing good practice guidance and up-to-date information, for example on relevant case law.

Members also believe that Branches should take a more active role in approaching employers within their regions directly and acting as facilitators and collaborators in organising training events for planners at different stages in their careers. This could be a way of promoting the importance of CPD to employers and would also create a network of similarly-experienced planners within a geographical area who could share best practice.