

A specific focus
on issues
of
**training and
employment**
of
disabled people

CIP EQUAL Round II
Action 2 – TCA M2E

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United Kingdom – “E-CUBE”
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FOREWORD

The EQUAL Initiative is a laboratory for new ideas to the [European Employment Strategy](#) and the [Social inclusion](#) process. Its mission is to promote a more inclusive work life through fighting discrimination and exclusion based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. EQUAL is implemented in and between Member States and is funded through the [European Social Fund](#).

EQUAL assists people with disabilities to become actors in their own integration

(a) Empowerment barriers for people with disabilities

Over 50 million people of working age within the EU have some form of disability and only about 40% of them are employed. The unemployment rate of people with a moderate illness or disability is about twice as high as for persons with no disability, while the unemployment rate of persons with a severe illness or disability is about three times the level of non-disabled persons.

In addition, because of the way in which they have been cared for or educated, people with disabilities are often not eager to take the initiative, nor prepared to take advantage of active employment measures. Integration agencies can also unconsciously contribute to this passive stance, as they often take action on behalf of people with disabilities without involving them in the relevant decisions.

(b) Participation is central to integration

The Report of the Employment Task Force states: "Activation is all the more necessary for these people (people with disabilities), as part of a broader inclusion strategy." The report identifies Member States that need to introduce more active labour market policies and those that should reconsider the link between social or disability benefits and participation in such measures.

As part of the European Employment Strategy, Guideline 1 calls on Member States for "personalised action, special attention to people facing greatest difficulties" and Guideline 7 encourages the integration of such people "by developing their employability, increasing job opportunities and preventing all forms of discrimination against them".

In addition to its European Employment Strategy, the EU also has a Disability Strategy that promotes the full participation of people with disabilities and their involvement in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of changes in policies, practices and programmes.

(c) Countering exclusion and increasing employability

EQUAL has addressed the question of how the full participation of people with disabilities can be facilitated by strategies that enhance the individual's capacity to make an impact on the design and implementation of measures that are intended to increase their employability. EQUAL experiments have sought to counteract the fact that integration or re-integration can be a very lengthy process and that the longer it continues the more people will be discouraged to engage in any form of pro-active behaviour. These tests and experiments have:

- Created new instruments to measure empowerment;
- Developed new roles to promote empowerment in vocational integration;
- Developed a new approach to promote empowerment in career progression;
- Reinforced empowerment in vocational integration by adopting empowerment approaches in social integration activities.

EQUAL experiences offer new approaches that combine activation measures with a deliberate strategy of empowering people with disabilities to steer their own integration processes.

1. Introduction

1.1. The objective of the study

Much has been written about the position of disabled people on the labour market and their attempts for work integration. A lot has been done in recent years across European Union to alleviate undoubtedly difficult situation of disabled people on the labour market. The starting point for the past, current and future interventions aimed at improving the position of disadvantaged people on the labour market is a thorough and objective job market research and analysis. It plays an indispensable role in assessing employment prospects of the target groups from an informed, supported and empowered position.

Among the central themes of interest connecting our transnational consortium is the lifelong education. Lifelong or continuing education is undoubtedly a very powerful tool which holds an excellent potential for improving chances of disabled people on the job market. The focus of our research work is aimed at investigating importance of the role which lifelong education plays in improving the status of disabled people on the job market. We pay a special attention to comparing the found facts among the consortium member countries.

Although there has been generally no particular shortage of base statistical data on the topic of disability and employment, we do not find that much information on lifelong learning. There are not much, if any, data available on attitudes and opinions of the target group on continuing education and its importance for gaining an employment. This type of information obtained from our target group is, however, very important to us. It provides us with an insight into how it is possible to motivate disabled people and engage them in a systematic lifelong education process.

1.2. Meet M2E Consortium

Five EQUAL development partnerships of five EU countries – Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy and United Kingdom joined their forces to form the M2E (Motivation to Employment) consortium. The common interests of the consortium are in the shared knowledge, information and experiences to empower excluded people across Europe at work. Knowledge about accessibility to work, life-long learning, skills needs and training opportunities, competence building, and socio-political imperatives that influence work and work opportunities are all crucial features in the ability to obtain and sustain employment.

Although our transnational partnership covers a wide range of target groups they all share the basic characteristic of being a disadvantaged group endangered by exclusion on the labour market. Thus our common interest lies in rectification of this situation, leading to building a social society. Basic characteristics of the participating consortium organizations are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: M2E member organizations

Country ECDB reference	DP name Basic DP characteristics
Czech Republic CZ-44 	<p>Increasing adaptability of disabled persons – ADIP</p> <p>The Czech Partnership consists of seventeen organizations, several of them have been involved in implementation of EQUAL round I. Several project partners have rich and extensive experience in delivering of ICT training to disadvantaged people. DP also has a rich experience in transnational project management, coordination and evaluation.</p> <p>The Czech partner emphasizes skill development of disabled persons through vocational and motivation training. The main goal of the Czech DP is development of innovative and functional methodologies leading to engagement, empowerment and employment of disabled people.</p>
France FR-RAL-2004-42903 	<p>EGALITHE</p> <p>The French partnership consists of nine organizations, involved in the employment, the vocational training, the accompaniment to work of disabled workers or in the skills recognition. The French partners management organization, OPCAREG is actually involved in three EQUAL projects for disabled workers or over 45 years old workers, financing vocational training or skills recognition for them.</p> <p>In France, they are interested in all the topics concerning the support to the employment, the skills recognition and the professional career evolution of disabled workers. Those kinds of transnational topics will help national DP in developing a new approach to the problematic.</p>
Hungary HU-15 	<p>Variációk foglalkoztatási rehabilitációra</p> <p>The Hungarian partners management organisation, Motivacio Foundation has participated in a PHARE project (Reintegration of Women over 40 into Labour Market), in cooperation with a Danish partner providing trainers for a course for workers of the foundation . Some workers in Motivacio have participated in international programmes and seminars (EU Community Action Programme to combat discrimination 2003-2005, Youth 2000-2006).</p> <p>The Hungarian partner is interested in transferring disabled employees from sheltered workplaces to the open labour market with the help of training and comprehensive labour market services; helping unemployed disabled young people in job finding; Influencing and motivating employers and national labour policy. We have been developing a new model of “intermediate workplace”.</p>
Italy IT-IT-G2-TOS-061 	<p>La Costa della Conoscenza - The knowledge-based Coast</p> <p>The Italian partnership has got an important experience on the matter of Community programmes and initiatives with its presence in transnational networks and agreements. We may cite: NOW, ADAPT, Art.6 E.S.F., other projects founded by ESF and ERDF. Provincia di Livorno Sviluppo is the Auxiliary Authority of payment for the PIC Interreg III A. Moreover we have a Phase I Equal project with Transnational partners from 5 countries.</p> <p>For Italian partner it is relevant to deepen all the aspects linked to the capability of local DPs to be present in a wider local governance process.</p>

Through the exchange of the European dimension it could be possible to define a promising practice of interaction between Equal local DPs and the other local actors involved in Labour and Social policies.

UK-Great Britain
Ukgb-126



ECUBE

For the UK partner, the emphasis is on engaging of those people from disadvantaged groups in reaching the labour market, supported by innovative use of ICTs.

Ecube is a multi agency partnership funded by Equal that was set up in 2004. Ecube delivers a number of innovative, interlinked projects in the Greater Manchester Metropolitan area with the common theme of finding new ways to engage disadvantaged people into life long learning and employment.

A key area for Ecube is finding new ways to deliver a range of activities to hard-to-reach groups that suffer multiple disadvantages and to involve the beneficiaries themselves in designing, managing and evaluating projects.

There are currently 14 partners in the Ecube partnership all testing innovative approaches to engaging hard-to-reach groups.

All M2E partners recognise that the transnational partnership facilitates the exchange of experiences and methodologies that lead to more reliable approaches to skills and training opportunities. This includes: diagnosis of the training needs, recognition and certification of competencies acquired throughout life, new training methodologies (at the workplace, self-learning, distance), the motivation processes for those disadvantaged through disability, improving people's ability to manage their own life projects, and mobilising social partners (municipalities, social organizations, corporate associations, trade unions and enterprises) to overcome a predominant culture used to take advantage of low qualified manpower.

The individual DPs in the consortium exhibit considerable synergy in both their approaches and the nature of their target groups. The outcomes of the DPs can be condensed to just two meta-intentions:

- Understanding the nature and development of exclusion and developing strategies to combat it;
- Developing appropriate learning and accreditation systems to provide people with the skills to help themselves to combat exclusionary trends.

The justification for these needs is demonstrated by the fact that the target groups are at risk of being left behind as far as employment opportunities are concerned. Evidence shows that lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important. Effective continued training can help both actual and potential employees to engage more effectively with the employment market. It is therefore vital that both management and employees are given as much assistance as possible to reduce the trends towards employment exclusion throughout Europe.

EQUAL transnational cooperation can be considered an advanced level of the EQUAL experimentation, which is advancing further developments of single national partnerships. Therefore it is important to establish and develop networks among those who operate on the same themes in EU countries because it strengthens knowledge and expertise. It is even more so considering the new 2007/2013 EU policy paying special attention to international cooperation. The transnational work is a process which enables a constant mutual exchange and knowledge transfer among the partners: it favours responsibility sharing, it allows accessing new ideas and improving local methodologies; moreover, the results may be better disseminated. The experience of working in a cooperating context means to work, in the future, with reliable subjects on development and implementation of sustainable projects.

Transnational programme enables shared experiences at all levels by professionals, beneficiaries, institutions, politicians etc. Transnationality is a way to accommodate distance, open minds, and to share new ideas, experiences and methodologies. It also provides an opportunity to enhance thinking and writing, capitalizing and creating models.

2. Disability statistical surveys

2.1. Disability status

Disability status characterises the population to those with and without a disability. Persons with disabilities are defined as those persons who are at greater risk than the general population for experiencing restrictions in performing specific tasks or participating in role activities. This group would include persons who experience limitations in basic activity functioning, such as walking or hearing, even if such limitations were ameliorated by the use of assistive devices, a supportive environment or plentiful resources. Such persons may not experience limitations in the specifically measured tasks, such as bathing or dressing, or participation activities, such as working or going to church, because the necessary adaptations have been made at the person or environmental levels. These persons would still, however, be considered to be at greater risk for restrictions in activities and/or participation than the general population because of the presence of limitations in basic activity functioning and because the absence of the current level of accommodation would jeopardise their current levels of participation.

It is recommended that the following 6 domains be considered essential in determining disability:

- i. Walking;
- ii. Seeing;
- iii. Hearing; and
- iv. Cognition;
- v. Self care; and
- vi. Communication

2.2. Disability framework and terminology

In 2001 The World Health Organization (WHO) issued the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) which is the successor of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps issued in 1980 (ICIDH). The ICF is a classification system offering a conceptual framework with conceptual definitions, terminology and definitions of the terms, and classifications of contextual components associated with disability including both participation and environmental factors.

The International Classification of Impairment Disability and Handicap (ICIDH) was a medically-based way of measuring who and what disabled people were. Problems with such impairment-based measures are that they threaten to separate the socio-economic status measures into distinct impairment groupings. Consequently, the focus of legislation, policy and practice is on addressing exclusion as a consequence of impairment rather than as a consequence of disabling environments.

The ICF attempts to look at the impact of the environment, both physical and attitudinal, in disabling people living with impairments. The ICF distinguishes multiple dimensions that can be used to monitor the situation of individuals with disability. The system is divided into two parts each with two components;

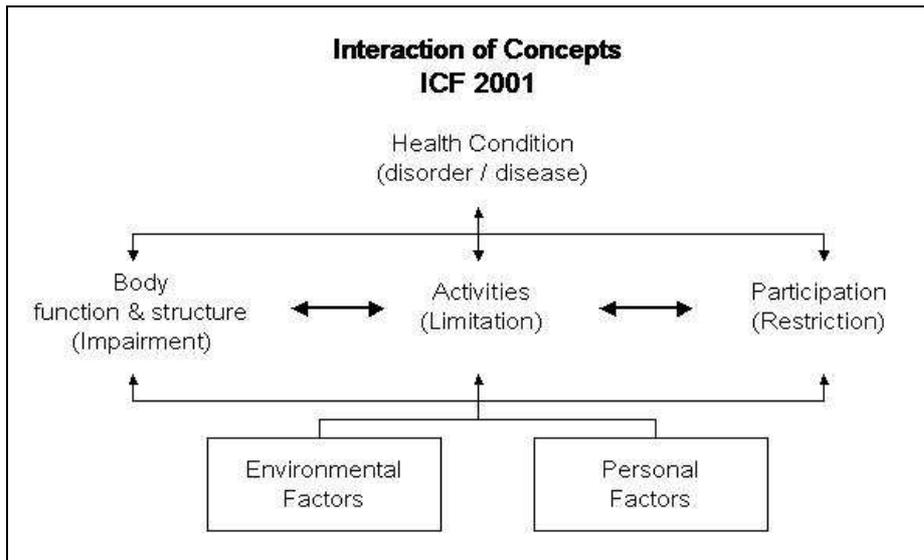
- (1.0) Functioning and disability, which include the components:
 - (1.1) Body functions and body structures (impairments); and

- (1.2) Activities (limitations) and participation (restrictions).
- (2.0) Contextual factors which include the components:
 - (2.1) Environmental factors
 - (2.2) Personal factors

It is recommended that the following 4 domains be considered essential in determining disability:

- vii. Walking;
- viii. Seeing;
- ix. Hearing; and
- x. Cognition.

Figure 2.1. Interaction of disability concepts



2.3. Measuring disability

A usual format of a large-scale population survey offers only limited space and time for questions for one topic such as disability. Since the ICF offers several dimensions for use to develop a census measure, it is best to focus on a few of those dimensions, leaving the remaining dimensions for use in more extensive household surveys. Short sets of disability questions, which can be included in censuses and extended sets to be recommended for inclusion in population-based surveys are being developed and tested on the EU level. The aim of the recommended sets is to improve comparability of disability data across countries.

Three major classes of purposes for measuring disability in a survey are:

- (a) To provide services, including the development of programs and policies for service provision and the evaluation of these programs and services. The provision of services at the population level includes, but is not limited to, addressing needs for housing, transportation, assistive technology, vocational or educational rehabilitation, and long-term care;
- (b) To monitor the level of functioning in the population. Monitoring levels of functioning includes estimating rates and analyzing trends. The level of functioning in the population is considered a primary health and social indicator, which characterizes the status of the population in a society;
- (c) To assess equalization of opportunities. The assessment of equalization of opportunity involves monitoring and evaluating outcomes of anti-discrimination laws and policies, and service and rehabilitation programs designed to improve and equalize the participation of persons with impairments in all aspects of life.

The definition outlined in disability status requires that disability be defined in terms of limitations in basic activity functioning, and not by performance of or participation in the organized activities (such as educational attendance or work participation) While assessment of equalization of opportunities might seem to require measurement of activities and participation, such an approach does not help to identify changes in the level of participation in the population in response to changes in opportunities. It only reflects the circumstances of those who because of unfriendly environments or lack of assistive devices are experiencing restrictions in participation. Approaching the assessment of equalization of opportunity by recognizing the link between a basic level of activity and subsequent participation can reduce some of the methodological problems.

2.4. Social model of disability

The social model of disability has turned attention away from a preoccupation with people's impairments (and the associated 'consequences' on everyday activities) and focused instead on the ways in which disability is created – through the social, economic, political, cultural, relational and psychological exclusion of people with impairments.

In order to challenge the preoccupation with the 'consequences' of impairment, and instead make disability a social and political phenomenon worth eradicating, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation proposes the following definitions (1976):

- Impairment - lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb organism or mechanism of the body.
- Disability - the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities.

This distinction allows disabled people and their allies to concentrate on changing the environmental conditions of disability, focusing not on the individual impairment and its associated negative impacts on employability but on employment as one part of a whole host of experiences faced by disabled people. Tackling exclusion in relation to work is just one dimension of this complex call for social change. It clearly requires creative thinking about the relationship between benefits, work and support in terms of how social inclusion can be enhanced.

3. The socio-economic position of disabled people in EU

3.1. Basic demography characteristics

3.1.1. Population size

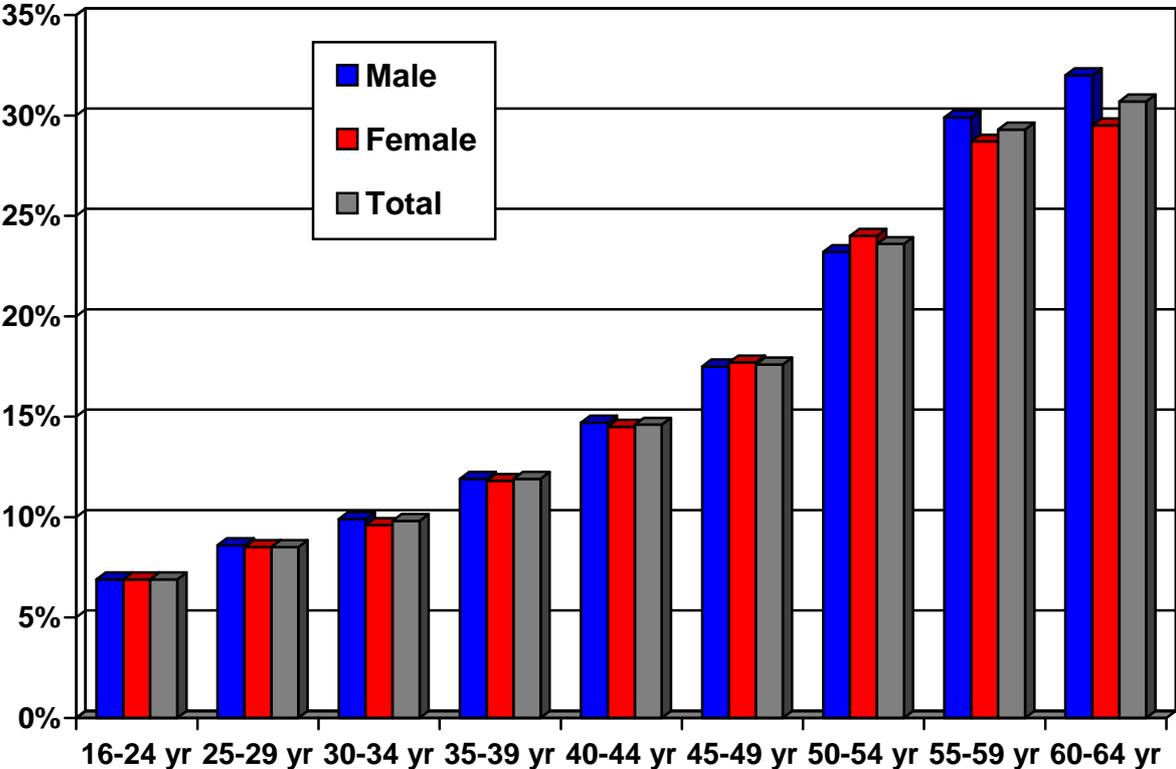
According to Eurostat data (Statistics in Focus, 2002) there are 44,6 million disabled people in EU 25; on average, 1 in 6 of EU's population. This count includes persons aged 16-64 living in private households in EU 25 having a Long-Standing Health Problem (LSHPD or health impairment).

Overall 15,7% of people in EU 25 aged 16-64 years have LSHPD (15,7% male and 15,6% female).

3.1.2. Age composition

Most people acquire impairment; as less than 10% of disabled people are born with a congenital impairment. The number of people with impairments will rise substantially across EU as a factor of old age and increased life expectancy. Less than 8% of those aged 20-29 years have a current long-term disability or health problem compared with 26% of those aged 50-59 years.

Figure 3.1.: Percentage of people with LSHPD in EU population by age categories

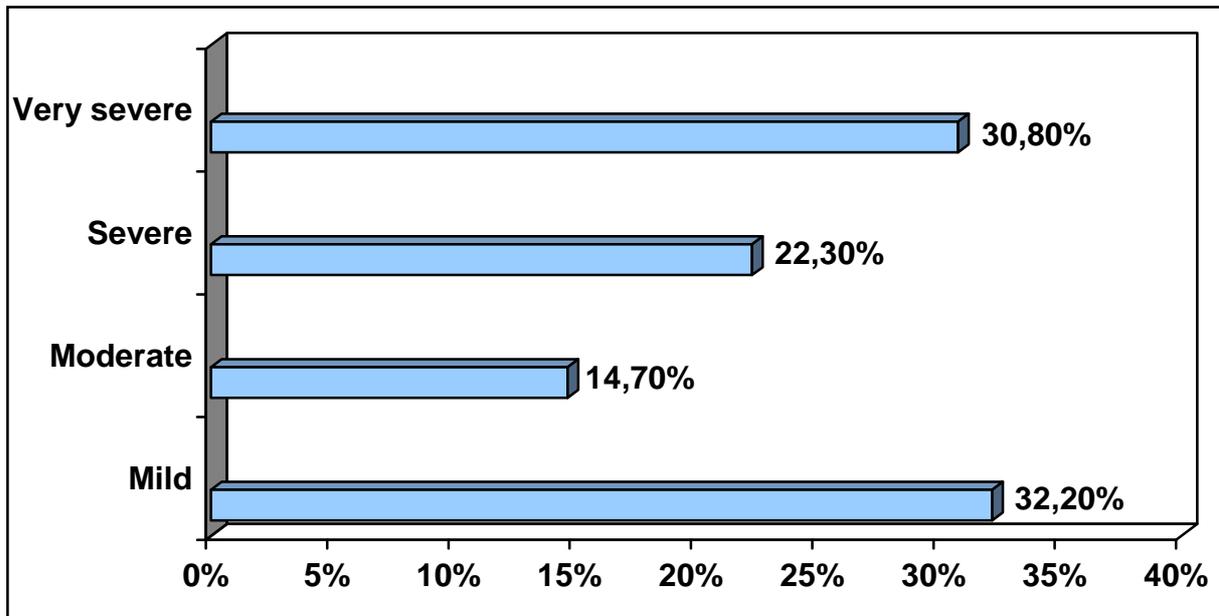


3.1.3. Gender composition

EU female population is in general less susceptible to suffer from LSHPD than male population with the exception of the age interval 45 – 55 years. Within this age interval more women than men suffer from LSHPD. The following age categories however exhibit a sharp reversal to the general trend of higher proportion of male population having LSHPD.

3.1.4. Impairment severity

Figure 3.2.: Distribution of disabled population of EU by impairment severity



The impairment distribution graph of EU population on Fig. 3.2 shows that 67,8% of disabled people acquired other than a mild impairment. Comparing this value to the number of economically inactive disabled people - 78% of disabled EU population (see Chapter 3.3.1), we can see that there are more people in EU with a mild disability than economically active disabled people.

3.1.5. Demography data from M2E member countries

Disabled population of M2E member countries contributing to the study (ie. Czech Republic, France, Italy and United Kingdom) follows rather closely the trends set out by the wider EU population of disabled people:

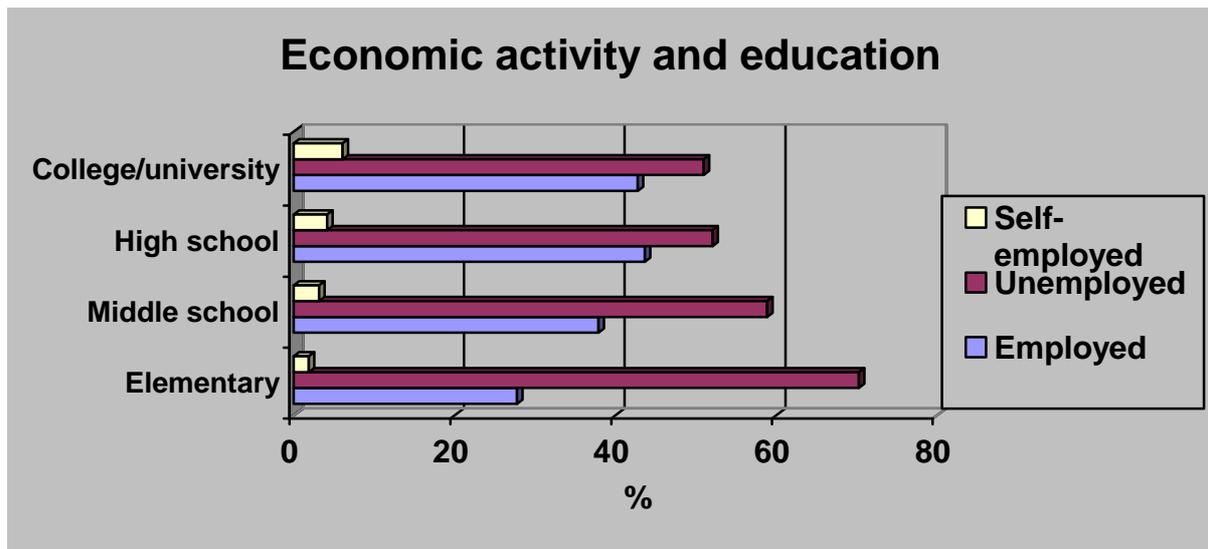
- Population of disabled people in the regions covered by activities of the M2E consortium varies between 12% and 24%.
- Population of disabled people in all M2E member countries is older than the general population.
- The pattern of gender distribution of disabled population is maintained, ie. there are more disabled women in the 45 – 55 year age interval and a higher count of men in the age category past 55 years leading to a retirement age.

3.2. Education

3.2.1. Education and employment

There is a strong statistical relationship between the level of attained education and employment status of disabled people. This relationship is clearly demonstrated on data collected by the Czech M2E member in its 2005 survey of disabled population in North, East and Central Bohemia (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3.: Education level and employment status



The ratio between the number of unemployed and employed people with disabilities decreases steadily with the level of education achieved. While this ratio exceeds 2 for survey respondents with elementary education level, it is close to 1 for respondents with a college education level.

Keeping this fact in mind we can turn our attention to Figure 3.4, which deals with education of disabled people in relation to education of the general population.

According to Fig. 3.3 18,6% of EU population who attained at most middle school education level are disabled. Similarly, only 11,7% of EU population who obtained a college degree are disabled.

If education levels of the general and disabled population were on par, all of the above percentages would be around 15,7% (percentage of disabled people in the general population). Thus there are more disabled people with lower level of education (+2,9%) and less people with college education (-4%) relative to the reference level of 15,7%. This means that disabled people obtained worse education than the general population. This fact does not fare well for chances of disabled people on the job market when considering the relationship between attained education and employment status discussed earlier.

3.2.2. Education of disabled people in M2E member countries

The fact that disabled population is less educated than the general population holds true across all M2E member countries. Italian population is an excellent example of this unfortunate phenomenon (see Fig. 3.5):

- Only 3,4% of disabled population have college education compared to 10,8% of the general population.
- 39,8% of the general population graduated from a high school, compared to only 23,4% of disabled population.
- Situation is on par with the middle school education level – 37,5% of general population vs. 38,9% of disabled people.
- There is a large education gap on the elementary level – 34,4% of disabled people finished their education on this level, compared to 11,9% of the general population.

Providing training and education for disabled people is less fruitful than for general population when the results are measured by employment status of trained people. This is shown on Fig. 3.6. Primary solution to this problem is obviously in improving the status of disabled people on the job market. Improvement can also be achieved by a better customization of training programs to disabled people.

Figure 3.4.: Distribution of EU population aged 16-64 with a LSHPD by attained education and gender

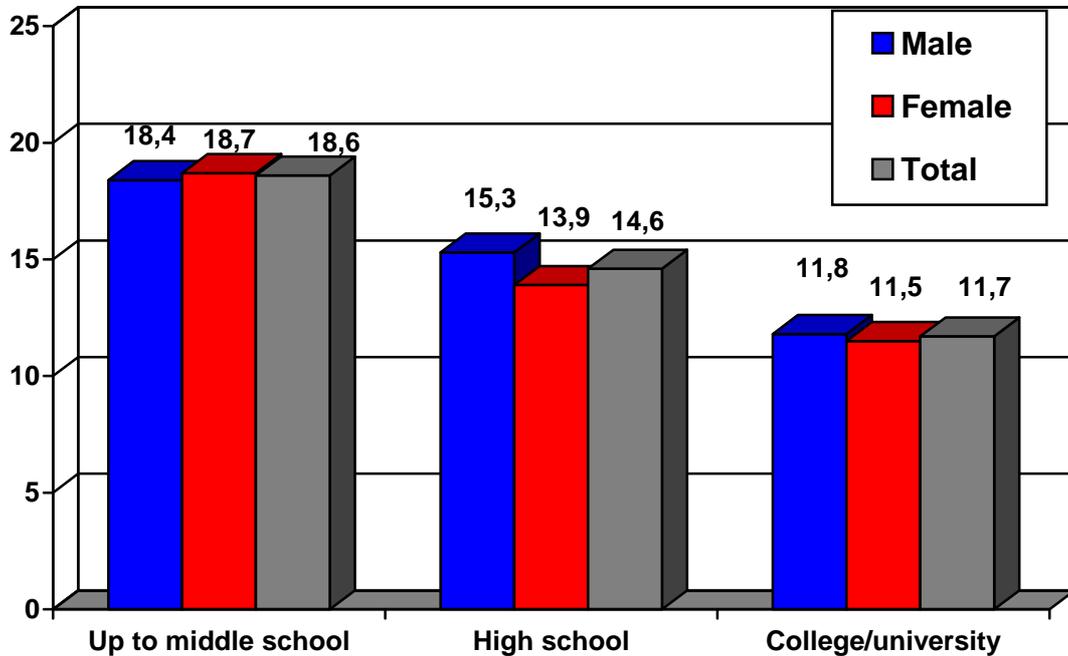


Figure 3.5.: Attained education in the general and disabled populations of Italy

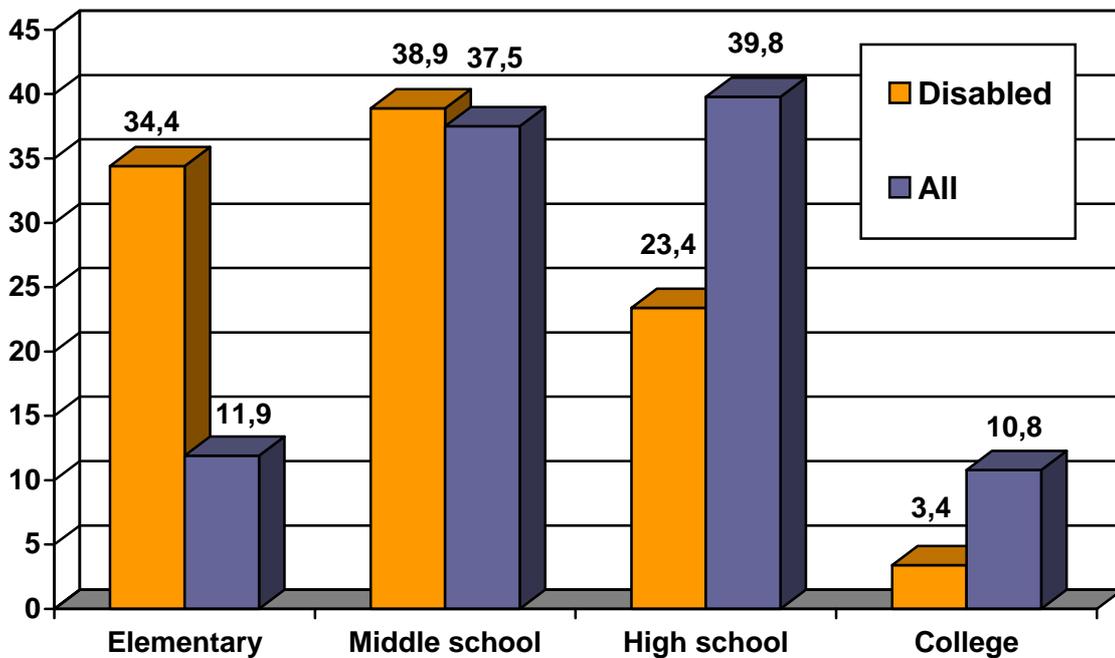
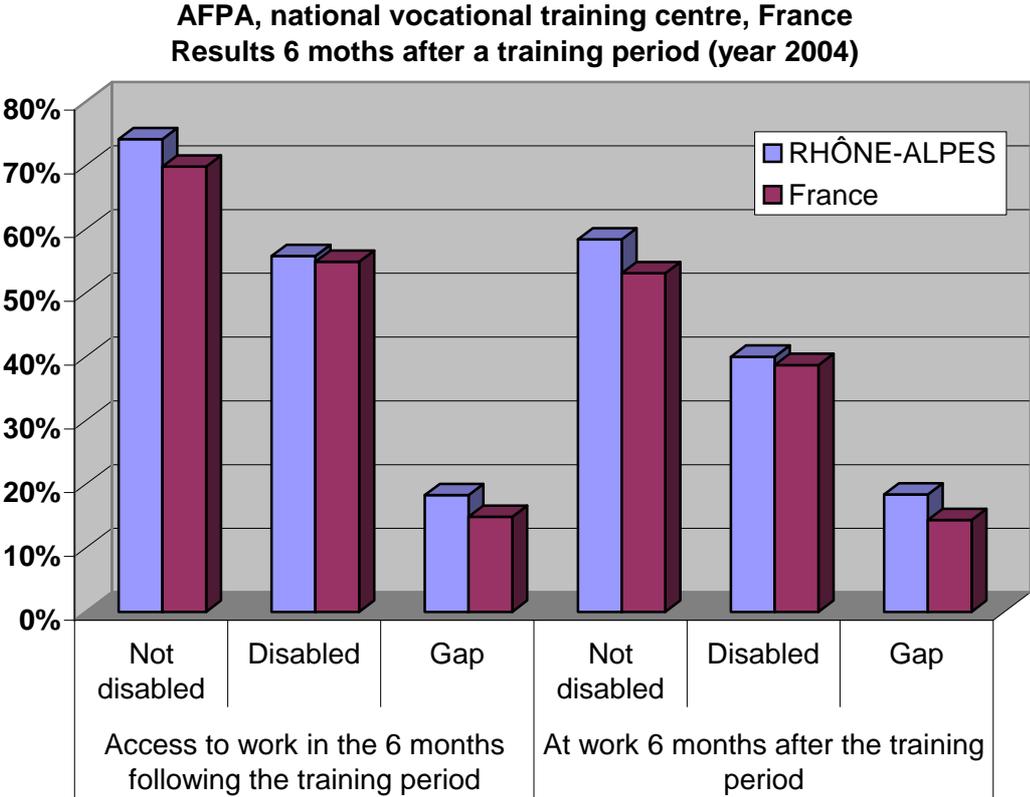


Figure 3.6.: Employment results following a training period.



3.3. Disability and employment

3.3.1. Economic activity of disabled population

According to the Eurostat's Statistics in Focus survey from 2002 78% of people with LSHPD aged between 16 and 64 years are outside of the labour force.

There are 27% of people without LSHPD in the age interval 16-64 outside of the labour force.

Figure 3.7.: Percentage of EU population with LSHPD

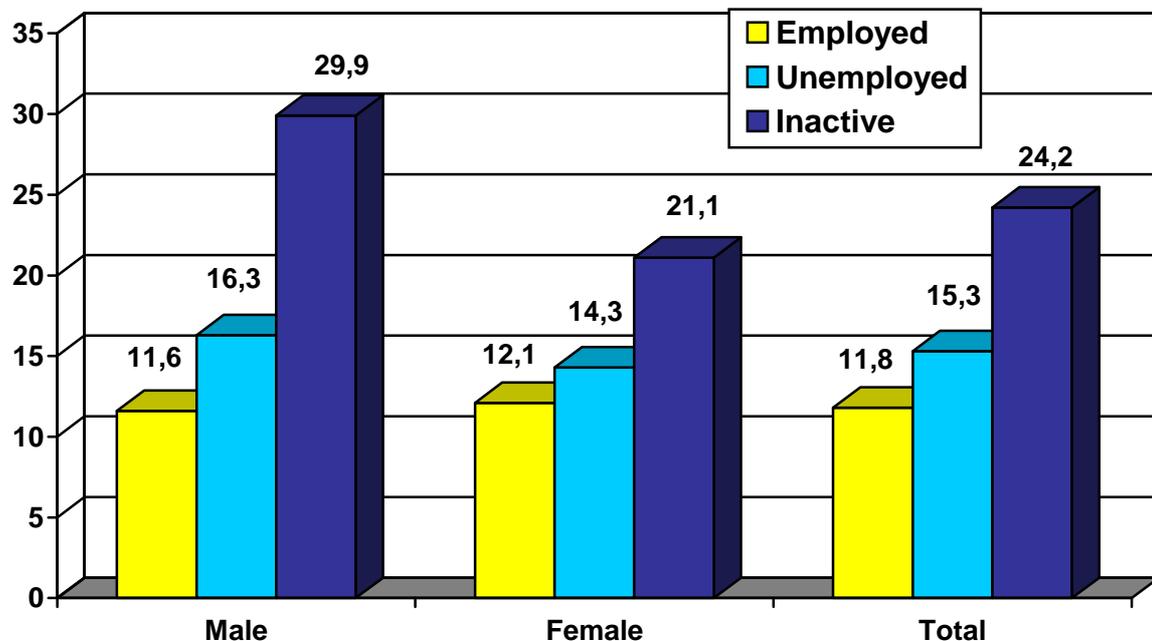


Fig. 3.7. shows economic activity of disabled people in relation to economic activity of the general population (by Eurostat Statistics in Focus, 2002).

According to Fig. 3.7 11,8% of employed EU population are disabled. If employment levels of the general and disabled population were on par, employment percentage of disabled population would be around 15,7% (percentage of disabled people in the general population). Thus lower employment percentage (3,9% deficit) relative to the reference level of 15,7% means that disabled people have lower employment rate than the general population.

Also according to Fig. 3.7 15,3% of economically active and unemployed EU population are disabled. This figure is, perhaps surprisingly, well on par with the percentage of disabled people in the general population. Thus inevitable conclusion is that disabled people suffer from approximately same unemployment as the general population.

This conclusion points us to a fundamental fact regarding statistical surveys (not only those dealing with employment of disabled people), which is we need to proceed with a great caution when interpreting results of statistical surveys and/or compiling results from different surveys. Even seemingly minor differences in data collection and processing methodology may easily yield erroneous results.

In our case it is obvious that the lived reality is different. Disabled population across EU suffers from substantially higher real unemployment rate. This is well documented by data from national surveys of M2E member countries. An explanation of the discrepancy between the statistical data and lived reality is in the third column of the graph, which shows the percentages of economically inactive population.

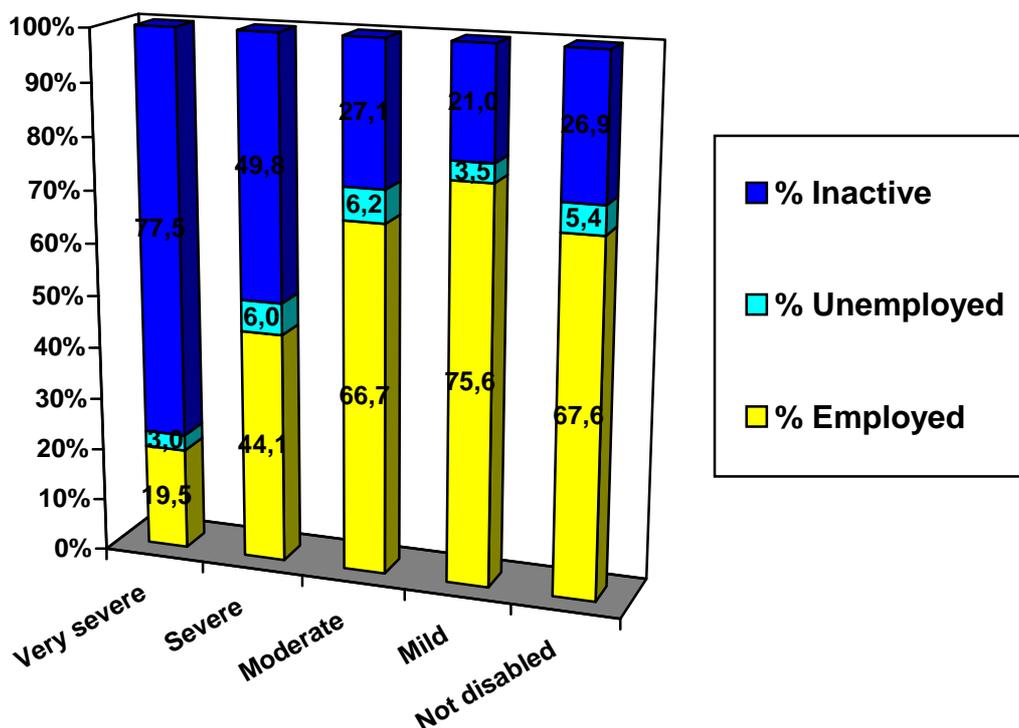
According to Fig. 3.7 24,2% of economically inactive EU population are disabled. This figure corresponds to 78% of disabled people in EU being inactive. This is quite a high percentage. Many other surveys show that a substantial portion of disabled people in this category would like to have

a job, but they are discouraged by many obstacles they face in their job search. Instead they settled for disability benefits. Some survey methodologies take this hidden unemployment in account (e.g. in United Kingdom) and some do not.

Of course the degree of participation in the labour force varies with severity of disability. The more severe the degree of disability, the lower the participation in the labour force: only 22,5% of the severely disabled are economically active, compared to 73% for those without LSHPD (see Fig. 3.8).

Although the European and other international statistical bodies strive to provide a unified methodology for statistical surveys, the solution is far away. In the meantime, when other than most general data are needed it is advisable to conduct an own focused sample survey.

Figure 3.8. Distribution of EU population aged 16-64 with a LSHPD by LSHPD severity and activity status (% data)



3.3.2. National data on economic activity of disabled population

Data from member countries participating in this study support and affirm the trends tracked globally in EU 25 countries. Among the key points common to all member countries are:

- Employment rate of disabled people is about half of those not disabled.
- Unemployment rate of disabled people is about doubling the rate of those not disabled.
- Approximately half of disabled population is economically inactive (lower percentage than reported by the Eurostat survey).
- A substantial portion of unemployed disabled people are out of work for more than 1 year.
- Disability has a great impact on the combined economic activity status of households.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of working age people reporting a disability.
- Up to a quarter of disabled people who are economically inactive say they would like to work.
- Employment rates vary greatly according to the type of impairment a person has.
- Disabled people are more than twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no qualifications.
- Disabled people more often work part-time.

There are both demand and supply side factors to explain the relatively poor position of people with disabilities in the labour market. Severity of disability is one of the clear factors in the ability or willingness of people to supply their labour. Other factors such as age, socio-demographic characteristics, level of qualification, and type of disability are interlinked, which may further explain why people with disabilities, in general, have lower employment rates and higher unemployment and economic inactivity rates than their counterparts without disabilities.

In addition, those with disabilities are more reliant on state benefits than others and are also more likely to live in households with relatively lower income than those without disabilities.

4. Member surveys

4.1. Methodology and data collection

4.1.1. Aims of the surveys

The principle goals of member-conducted surveys were:

1. Obtaining data on employment status of disabled persons specifically in relation to their continuing education needs, abilities and expectations.
2. Focusing on the subjective aspect of the survey – attitudes, approaches and desires of the target group itself.
3. Where possible providing correlation analysis of survey results among participating M2E member countries.

Out of four M2E members conducting the survey only Czech DP had it included in its original EQUAL program implementation plan. Thus only this DP had the resources to conduct a full-size sample survey. Other contributing partners conducted much smaller scale surveys, which can be characterized as polling. Thus their results have mostly qualitative meaning and must be interpreted accordingly.

The questionnaire form developed for the purpose of this survey consists of three main sections:

1. Basic personal characteristics
2. Accessibility of distance education means and tools
3. Desired types of training and education

4.1.2. Member surveys – Czech Republic

Over 1 000 disabled people were contacted in November 2005 with a request to participate in the survey. Contacts with potential respondents were mostly secured through various associations of disabled people. The survey was conducted in the North, East and Central Bohemia regions and care was taken to cover both urban and country areas. The method chosen for data collection was a questionnaire survey.

Almost 700 respondents returned their questionnaires with data (reaching an exceptionally high response rate close to 70%). The survey was conducted as anonymous, thus it was not possible to verify correctness of personal characteristics, neither request additional information for incomplete responses.

4.1.3. Member surveys – France

The study was conducted among 38 persons, all disabled job-seekers enrolled in the Job centre for disabled workers of Isère (OHE PROMETHEE ISERE). The group has globally the same characteristics as all the disabled job-seekers in Rhône-Alpes, there were more men than women, with a lower level of qualification than the whole group of job-seekers.

The most surprising fact may be that many disabled workers answered that they need a higher education degree to improve their situation on the marketplace, it is the most frequent response, far ahead of the others (computer and communication skills). Lower number of persons considering they need to know a foreign language should be linked to their low level of qualification. It can be partially explained by the fact that part of them were looking for information about skills recognition. People

with a physical or hearing disability desire more than the others to obtain a degree, on the contrary, people with psychological problems, intellectual deficiency or a disability linked to sickness tend to prefer communication and computer skills.

4.1.4. Member surveys – Italy

The study involved public job centres, the National Research Council and local associations (Italian blind people union, Disabled by industrial accident national association) of the 5 coastal provinces involved in the “Knowledge-based Coast” project. Each province contributed evenly with poll respondents. In total we received 54 filled questionnaires. Intermediaries collected the questionnaires in job centres and volunteers did in the remaining associations.

Together with regional Equal leader “Livorno Sviluppo”, we agreed for a non involvement of disabled people’s advisors. Since we do not have corresponding figures in Italy: we could at most ask the officials of the different associations (who know well enough the disabled people) for a contribution, but the results couldn’t be comparable with other partners’ ones.

4.1.5. Member surveys – United Kingdom

The questionnaire was conducted with four organizations which are part of the ECUBE DP. Each organisation works with and supports people with different disabilities. The organizations were United Response, Manchester Community Information Network, Manchester Libraries and Rochdale Carers. The total sample size was 49 beneficiaries.

The questionnaire was adjusted for UK statistics and also United Response translated the document for use with their beneficiaries. This included the addition of images which helped clarify certain questions.

The questionnaires were done with an adviser/ project worker present but the answers were individual. The role of the adviser or project worker was just to supervise and help if needed.

4.2. Interpreted data

The following section contains 12 interpreted data panels, each consisting of four figures – one for each member country participating in the survey, ie. Czech Republic, France, Italy and United Kingdom.

Data panels cover four main themes:

1. Basic demographic data characteristics of respondents (panels 1 - 4)
2. Basic employment characteristics (panels 5 - 6)
3. Accessibility of distance education tools (panels 7 - 8)
4. Desired type of training and/or education (panels 9 - 12)

Figure 4.1a: Composition of respondents by age categories and gender
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

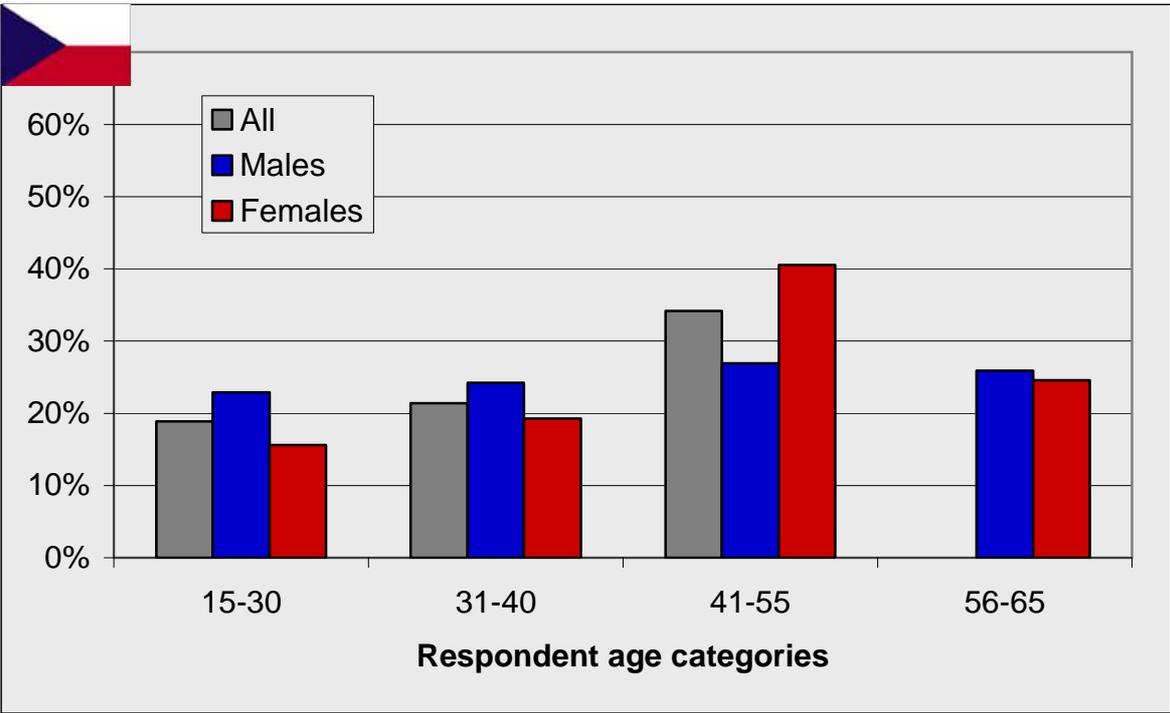


Figure 4.1b: Composition of respondents by age categories and gender
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

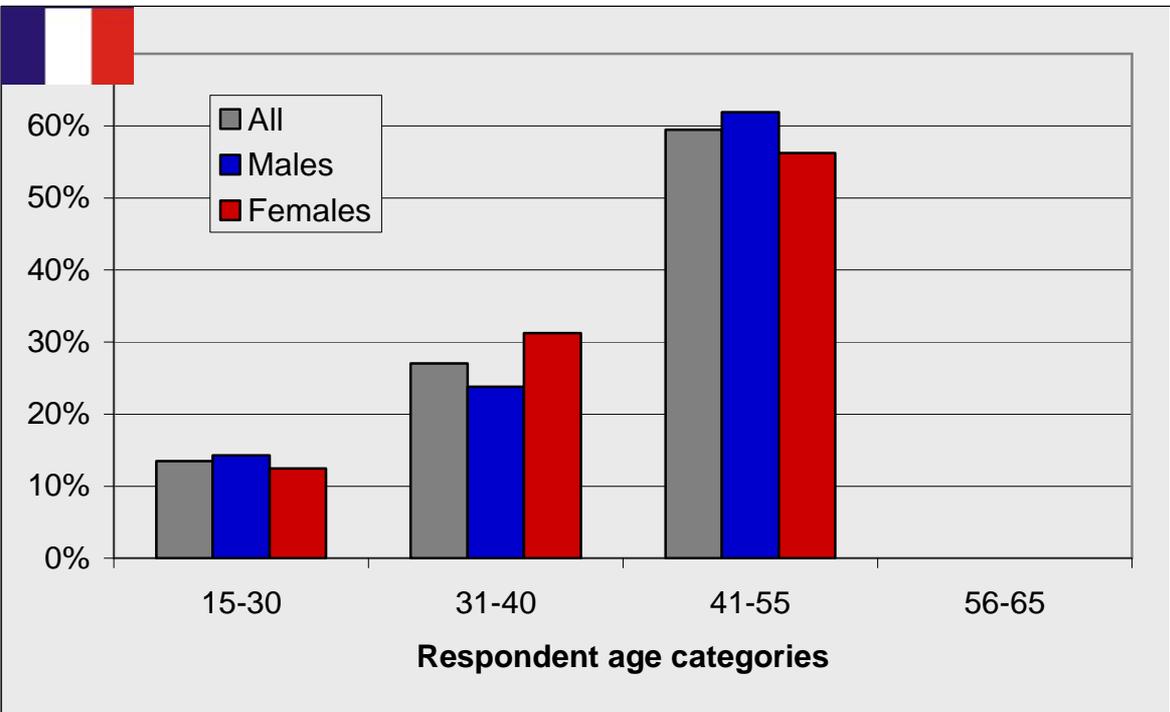


Figure 4.1c: Composition of respondents by age categories and gender
Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

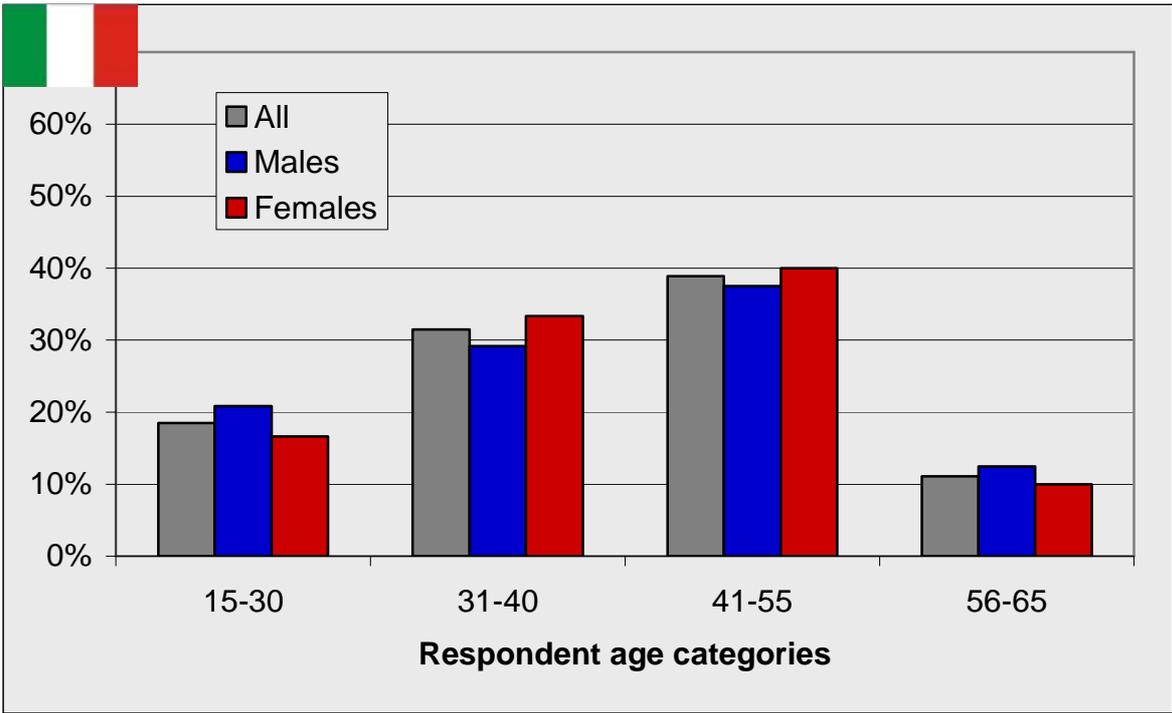


Figure 4.1d: Composition of respondents by age categories and gender
United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

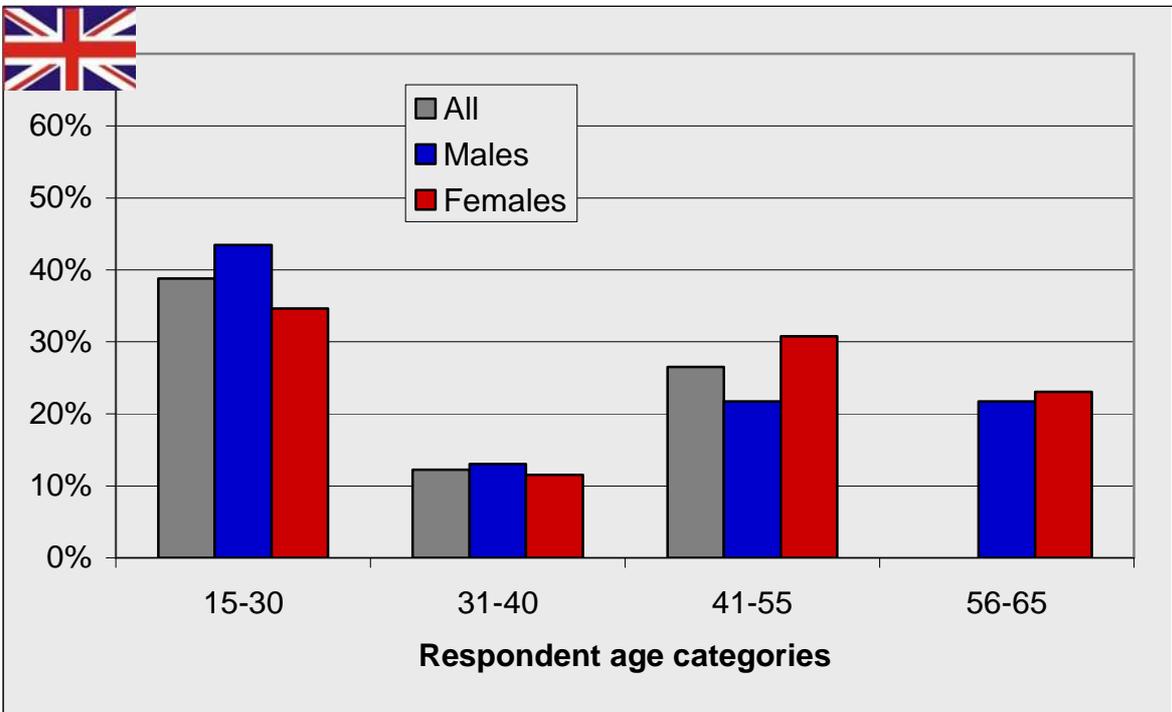


Figure 4.2a: Composition of respondents by education and gender
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

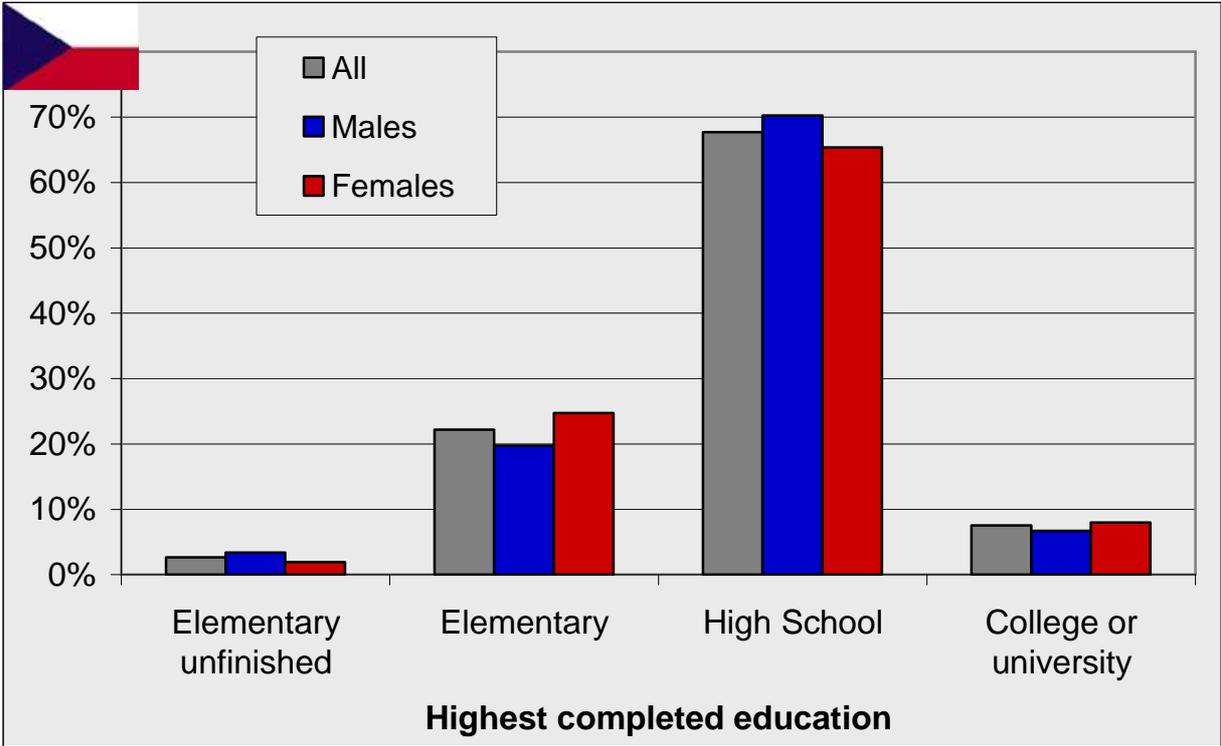


Figure 4.2b: Composition of respondents by education and gender
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

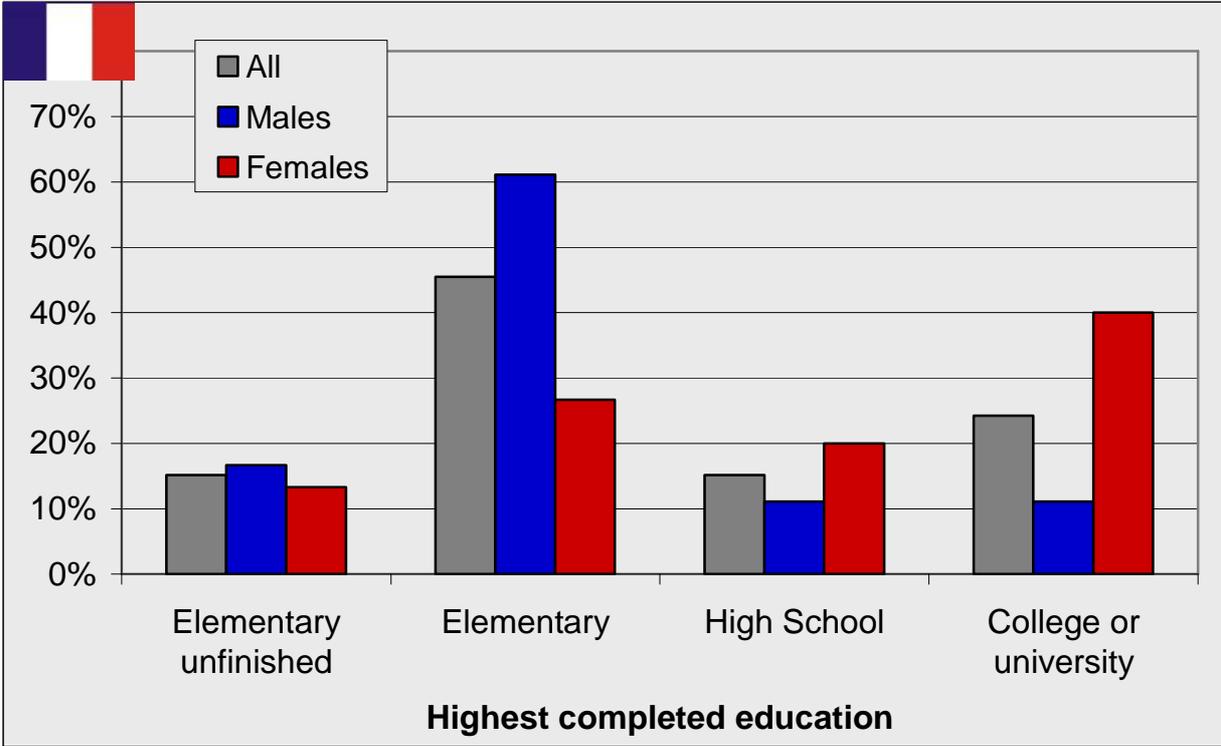


Figure 4.2c: Composition of respondents by education and gender
 Italy – Tuscany Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

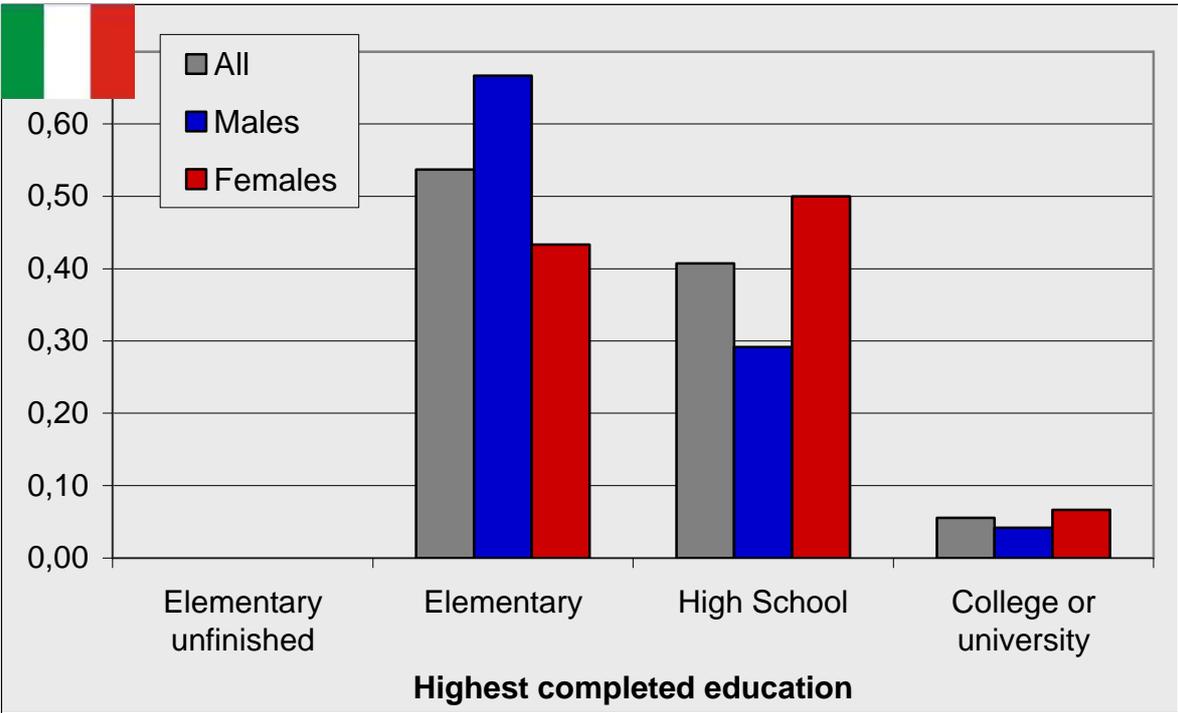


Figure 4.2d: Composition of respondents by education and gender
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

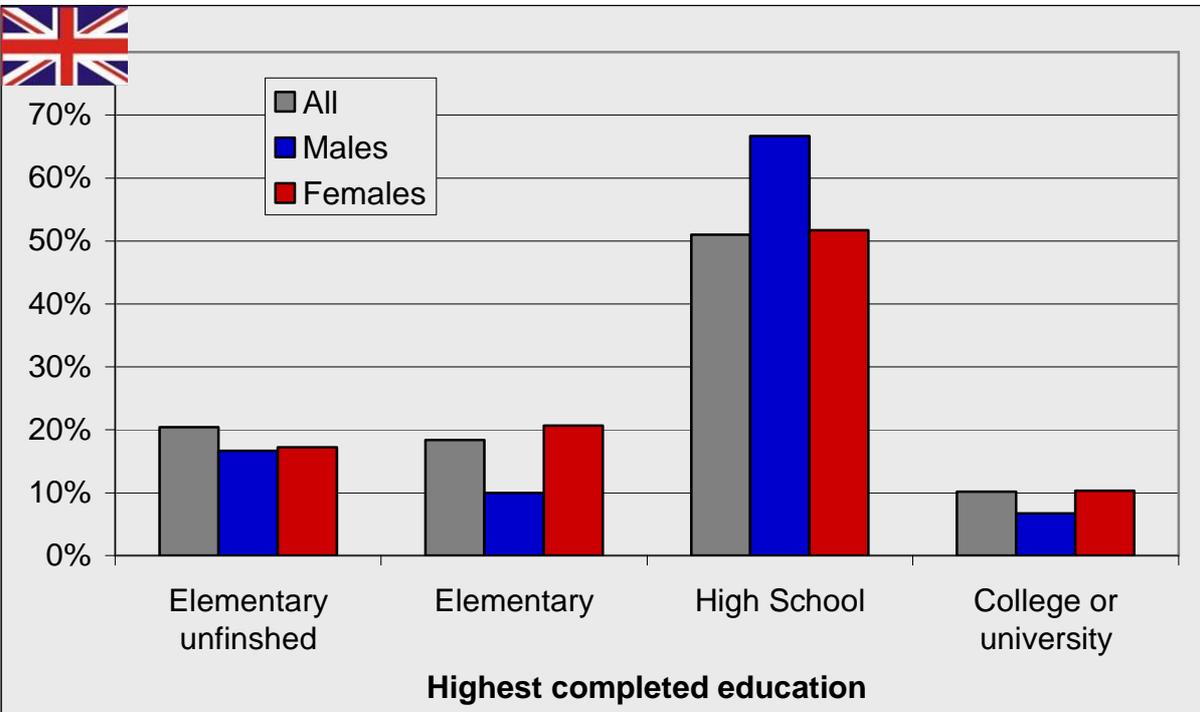


Figure 4.3a: Composition of respondents by education and disability
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

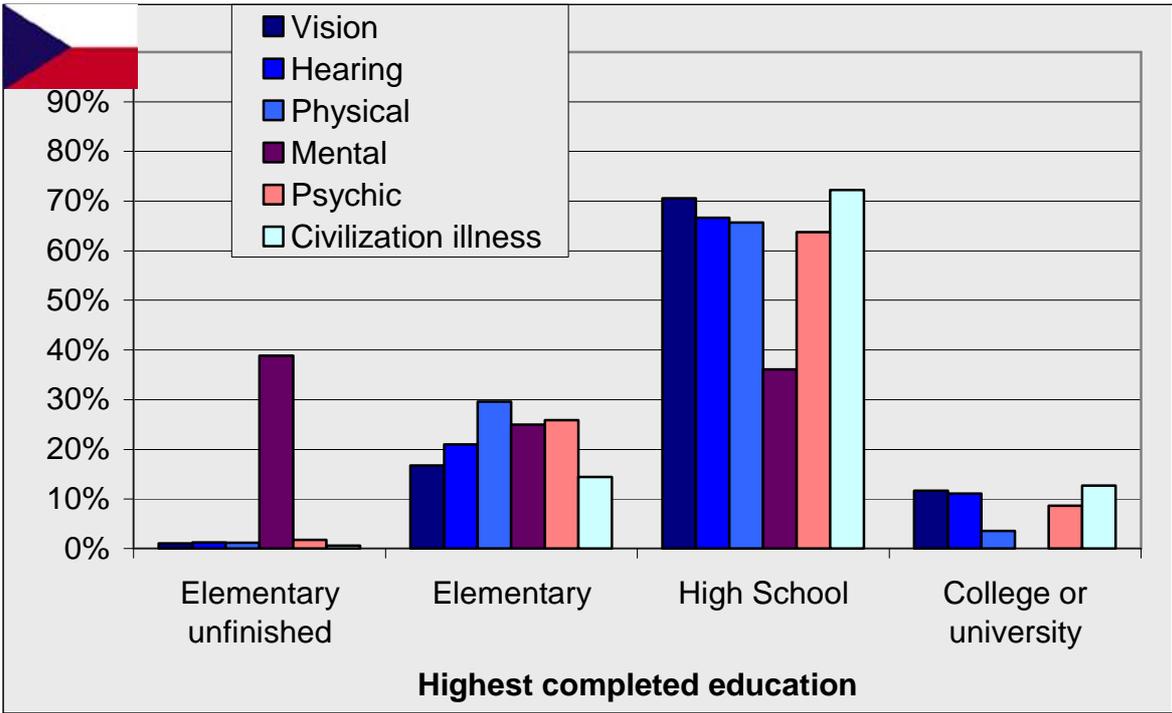


Figure 4.3b: Composition of respondents by education and disability
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

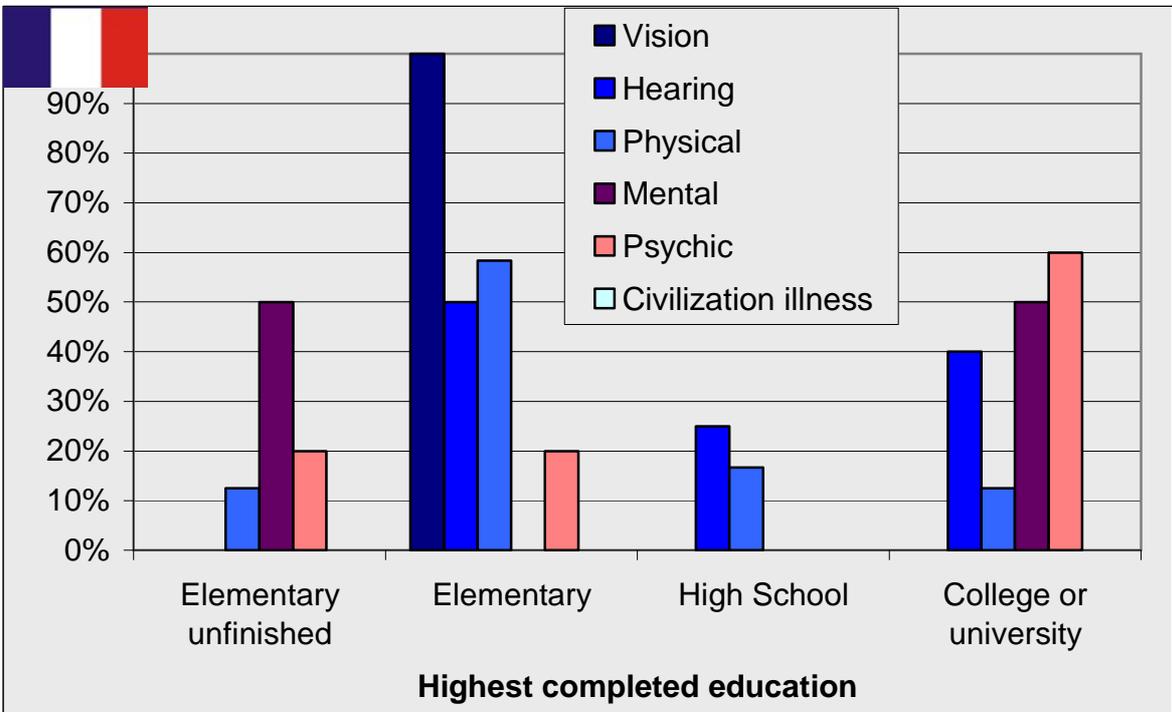


Figure 4.3c: Composition of respondents by education and disability
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

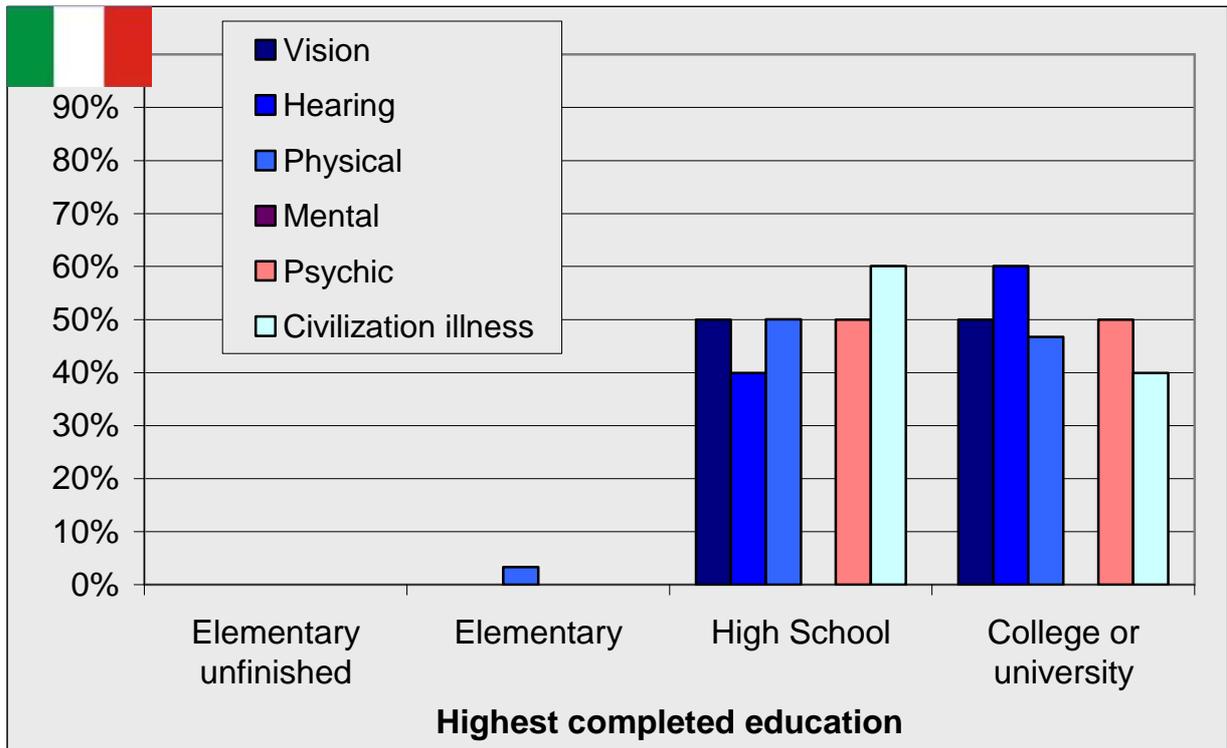


Figure 4.3d: Composition of respondents by education and disability
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

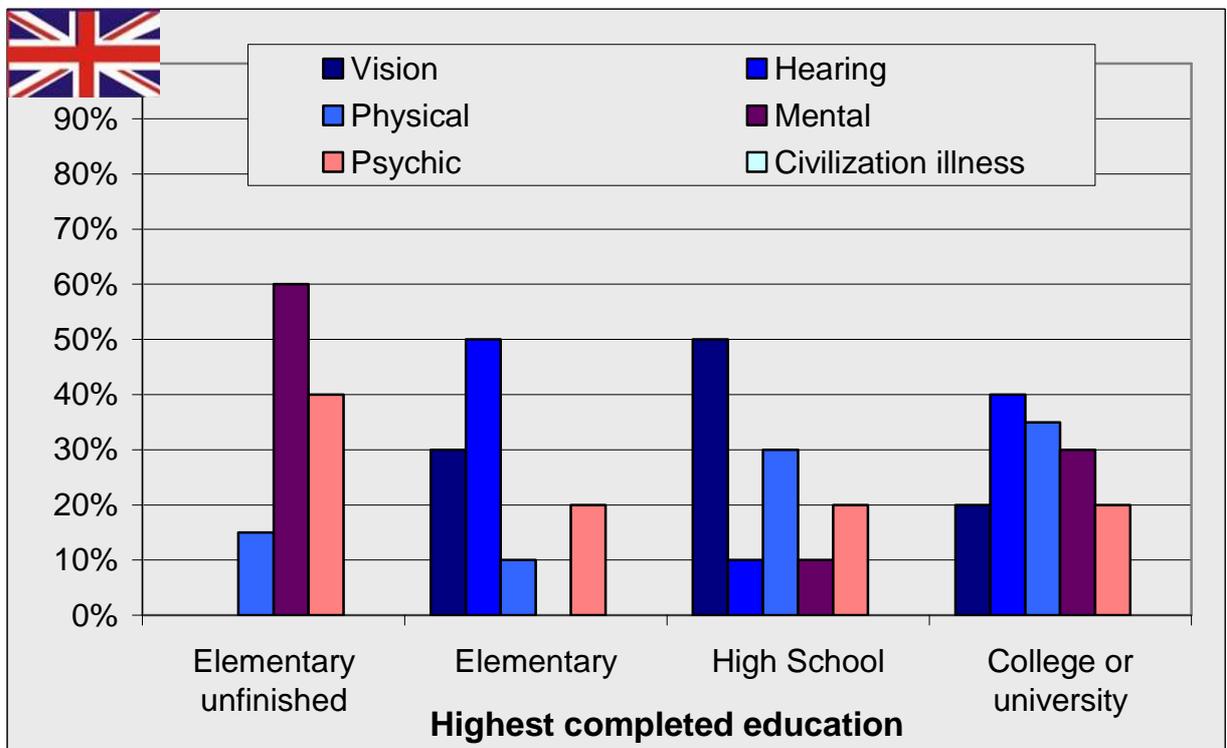


Figure 4.4a: Language skills of respondents
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

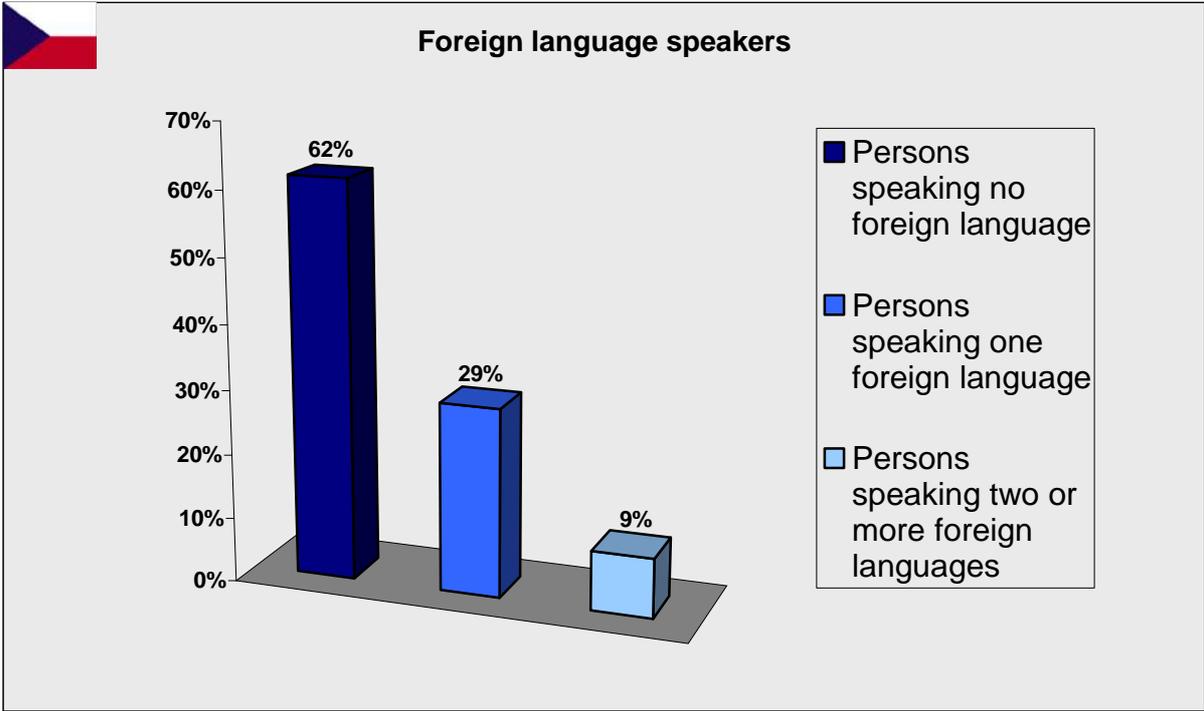


Figure 4.4b: Language skills of respondents
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

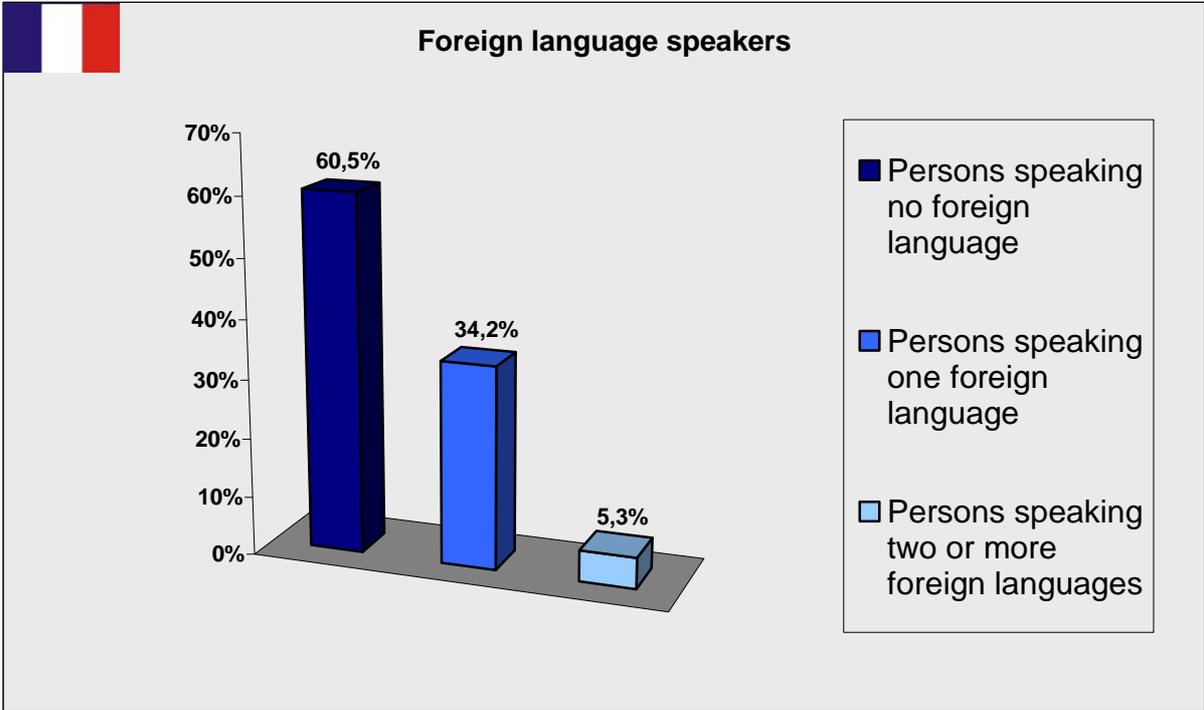


Figure 4.4c: Language skills of respondents
Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

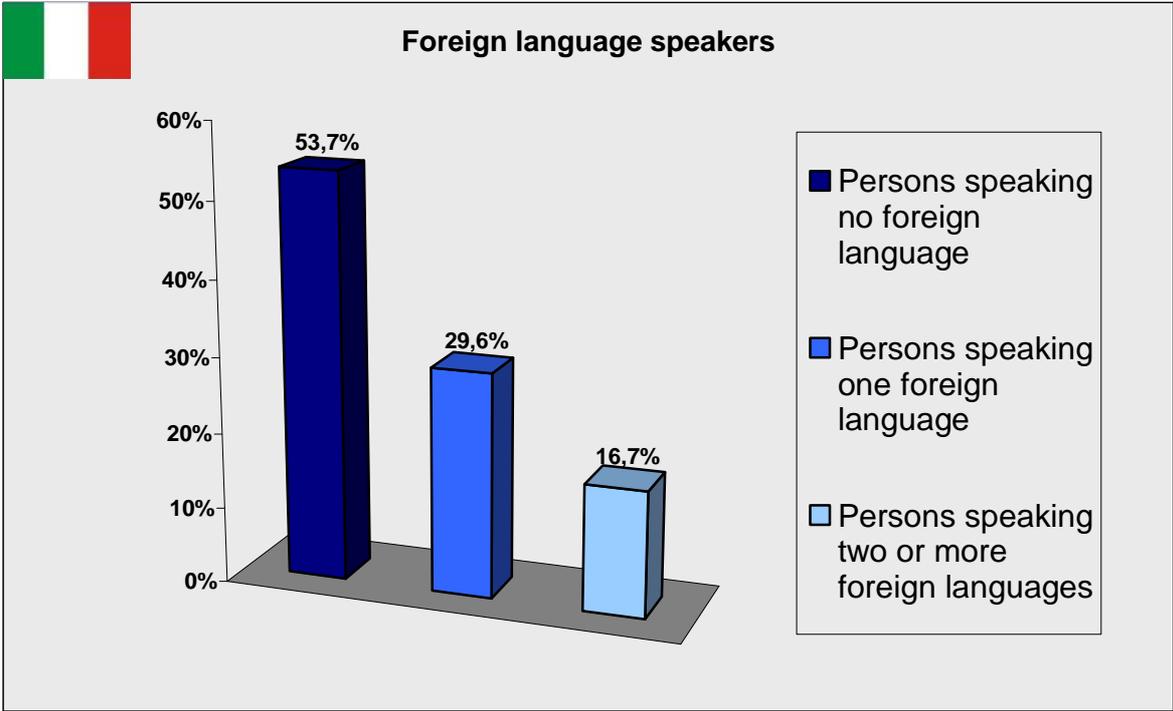


Figure 4.4d: Language skills of respondents
United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

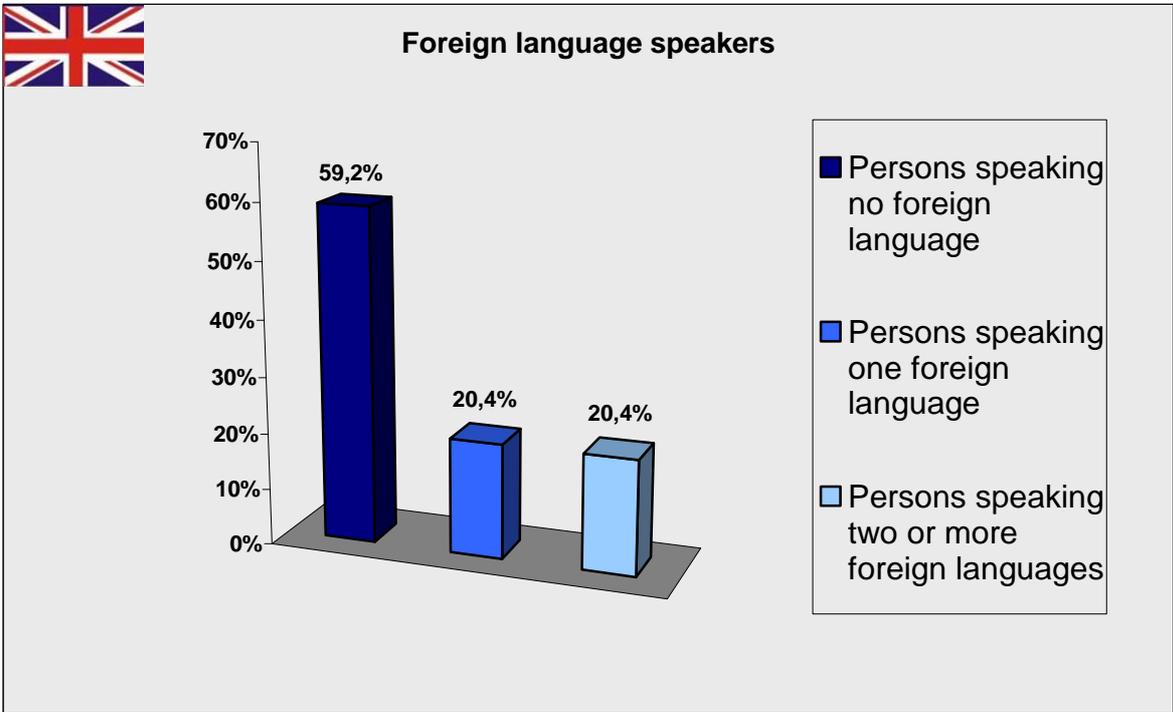


Figure 4.5a: Composition of respondents by employment status and gender
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

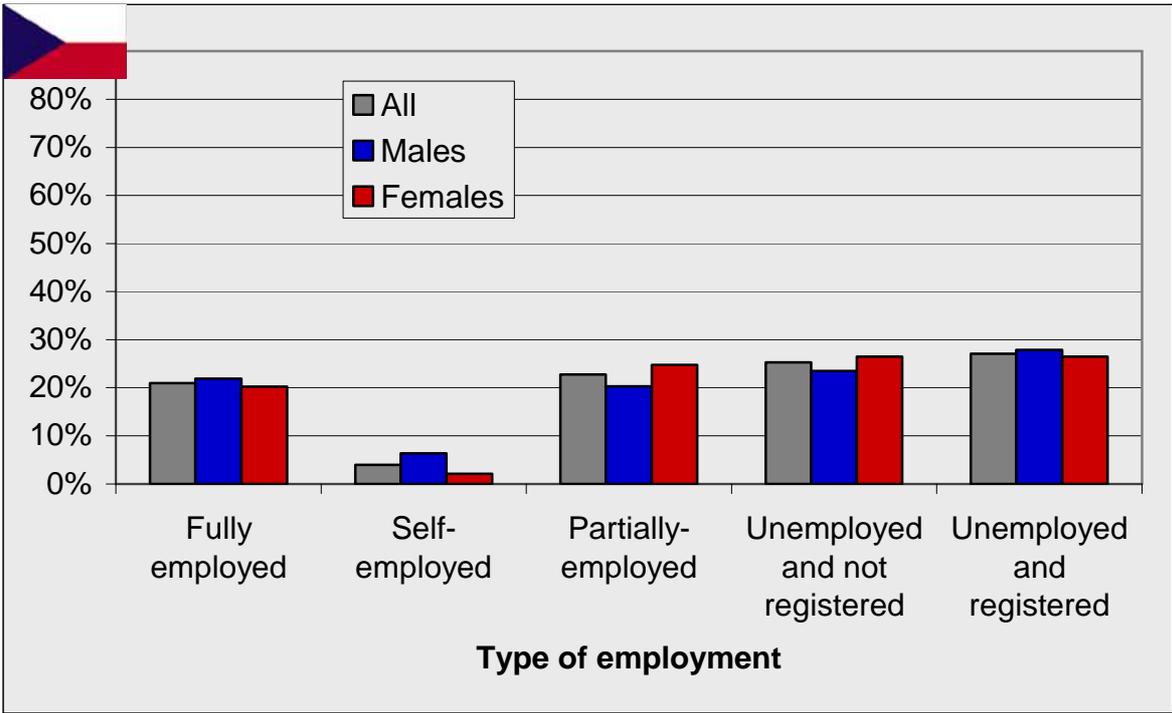


Figure 4.5b: Composition of respondents by employment status and gender
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

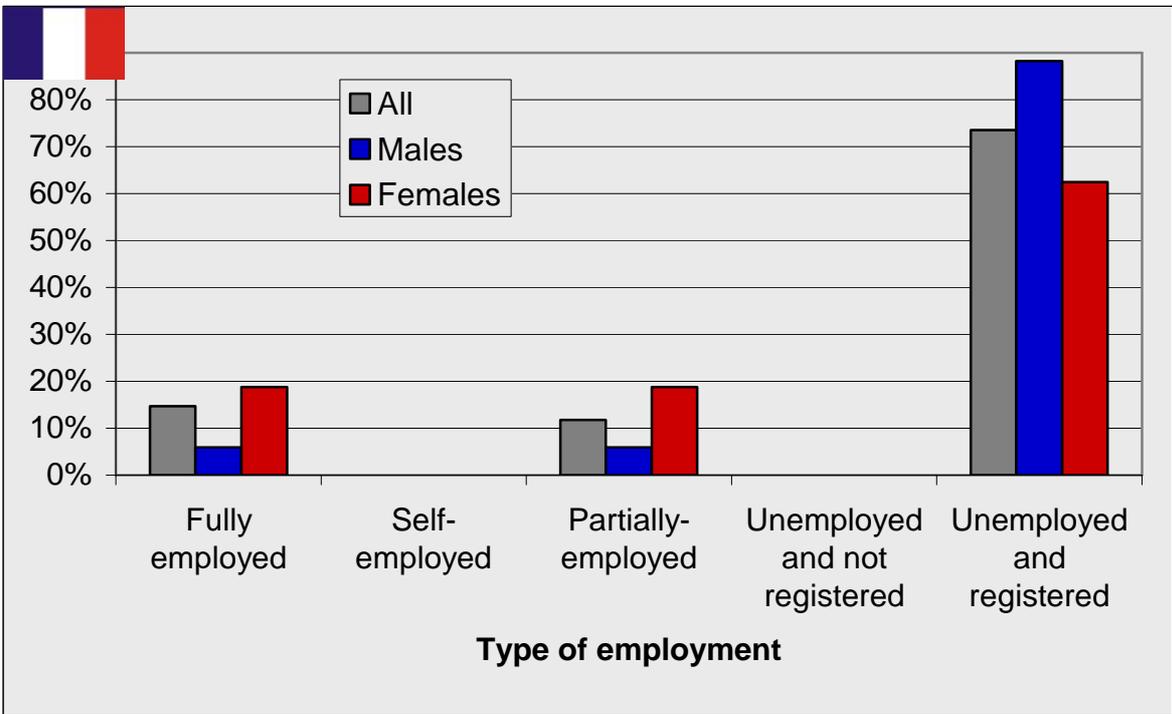


Figure 4.5c: Composition of respondents by employment status and gender
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

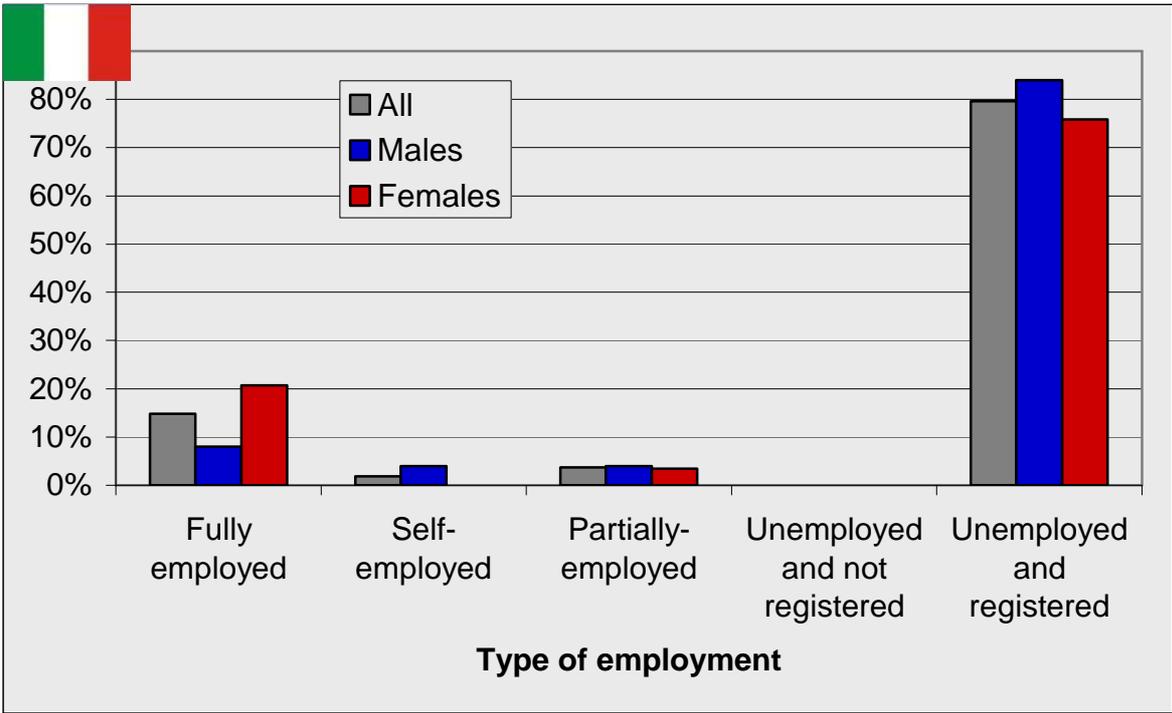


Figure 4.5d: Composition of respondents by employment status and gender
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

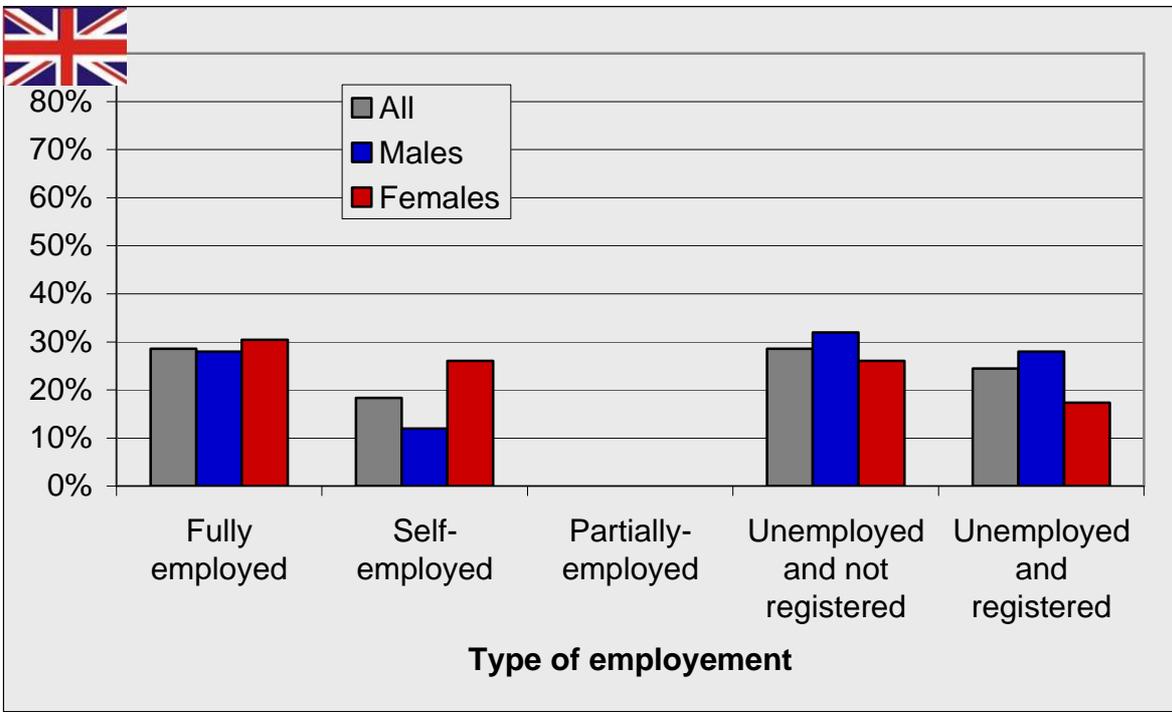


Figure 4.6a: Composition of respondents by employment status and disability
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

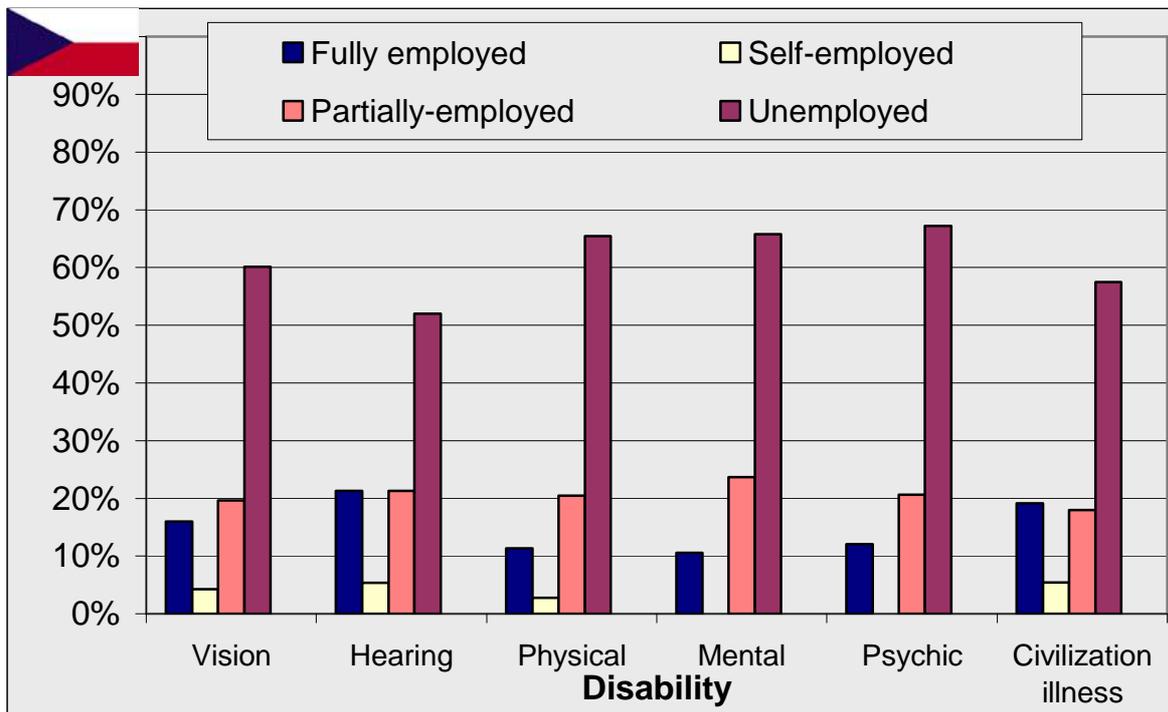


Figure 4.6b: Composition of respondents by employment status and disability
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

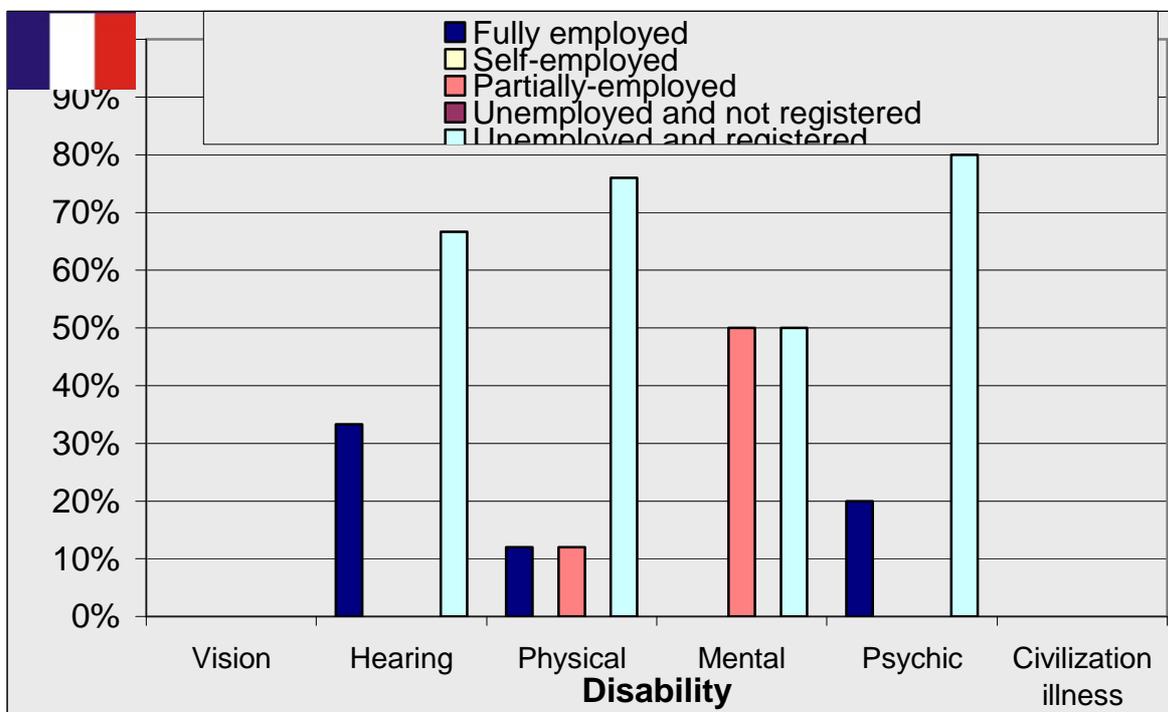


Figure 4.6c: Composition of respondents by employment status and disability
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

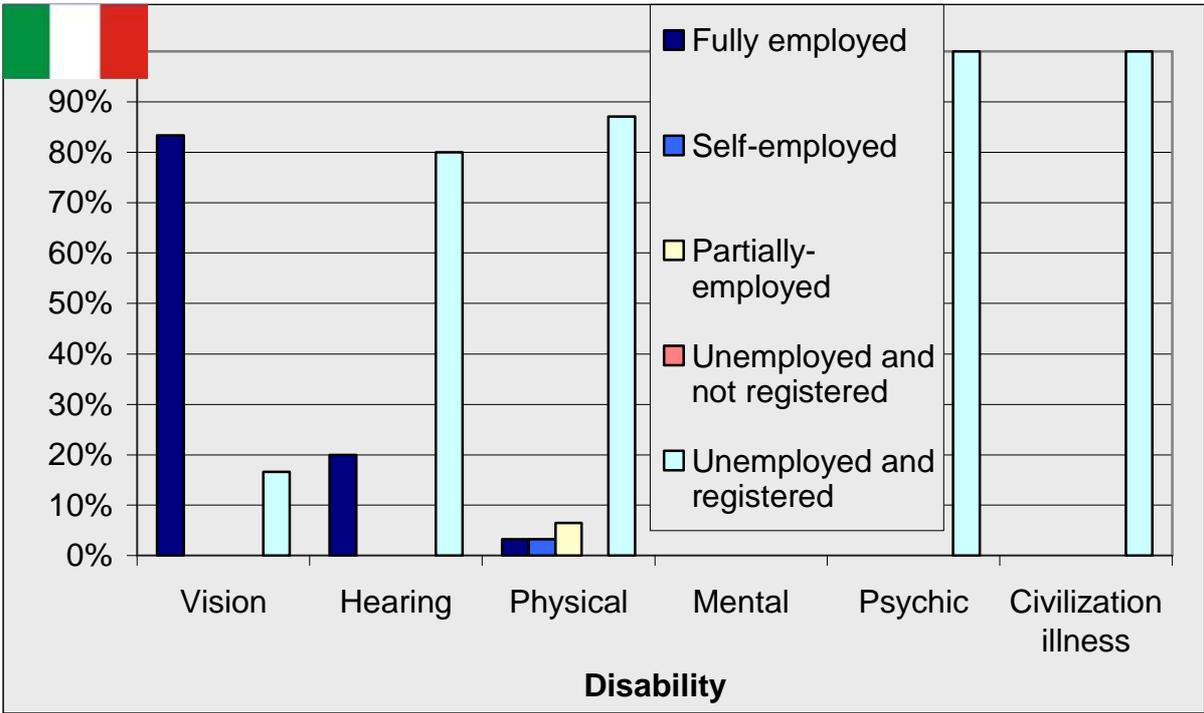


Figure 4.6d: Composition of respondents by employment status and disability
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

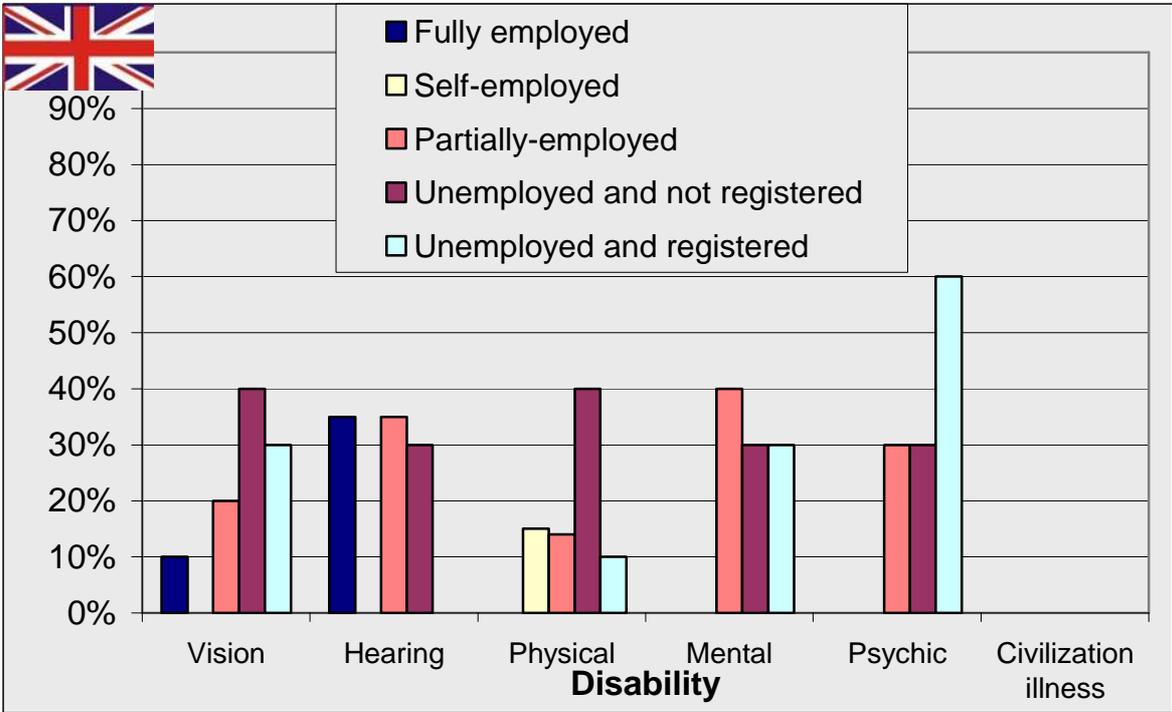


Figure 4.7a: Level of computer usage by respondents
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

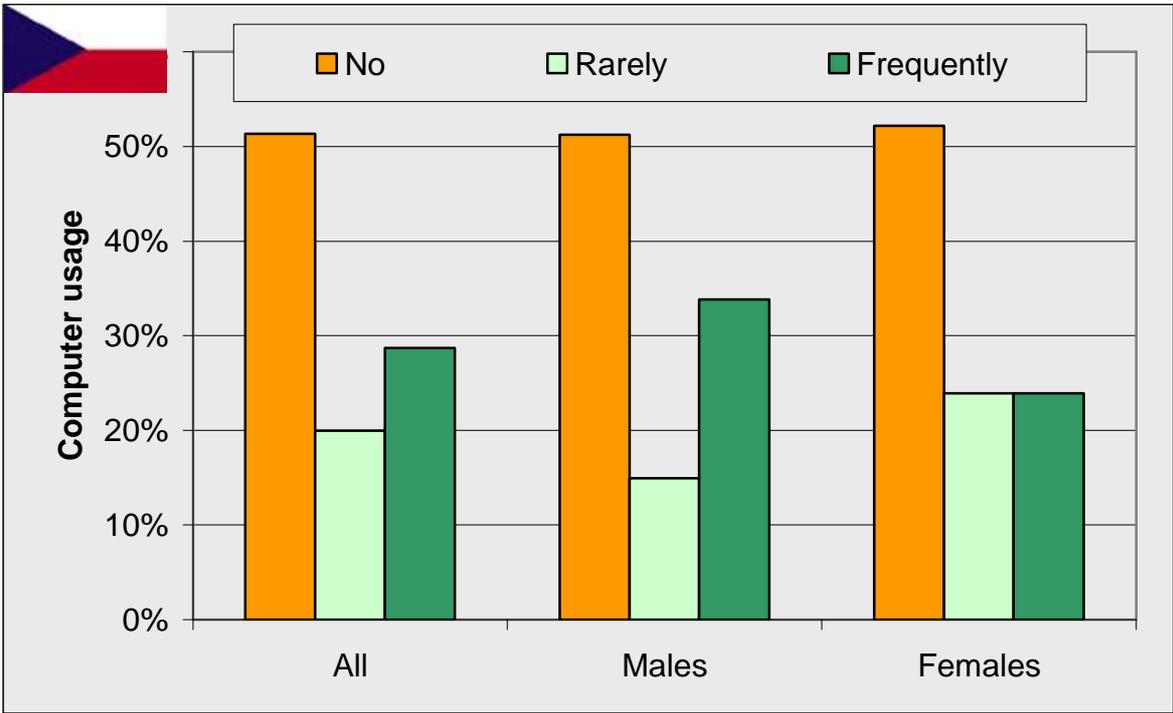


Figure 4.7b: Level of computer usage by respondents
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

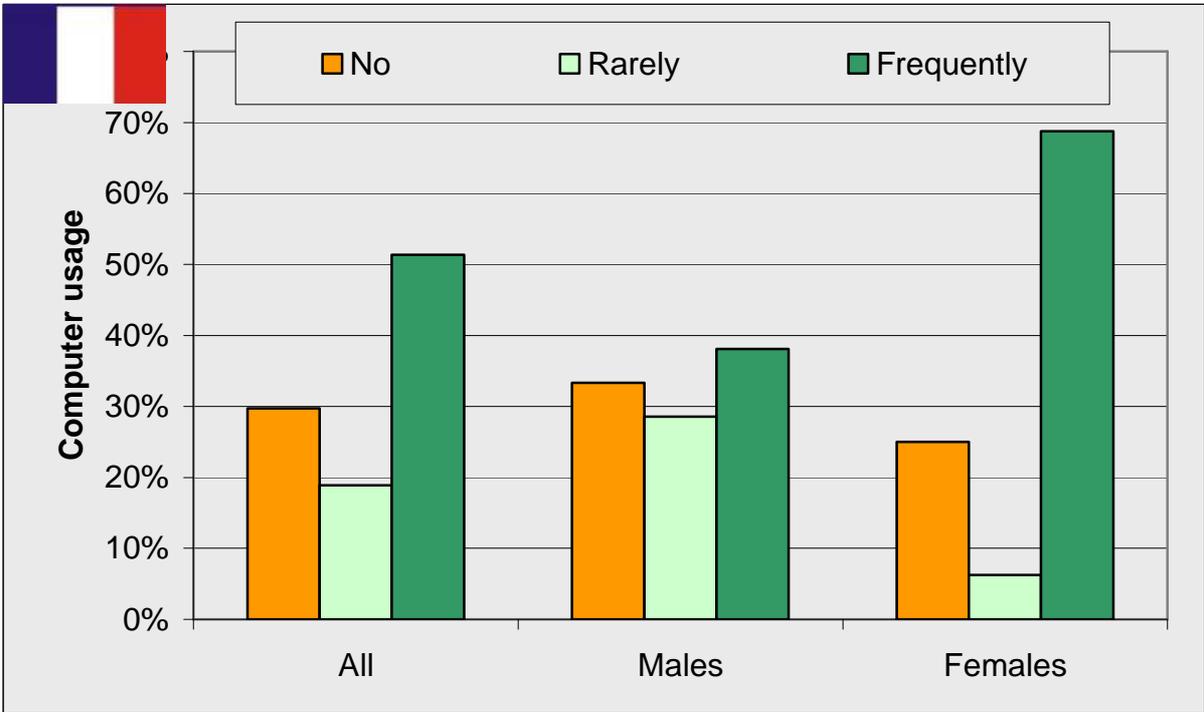


Figure 4.7c: Level of computer usage by respondents
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

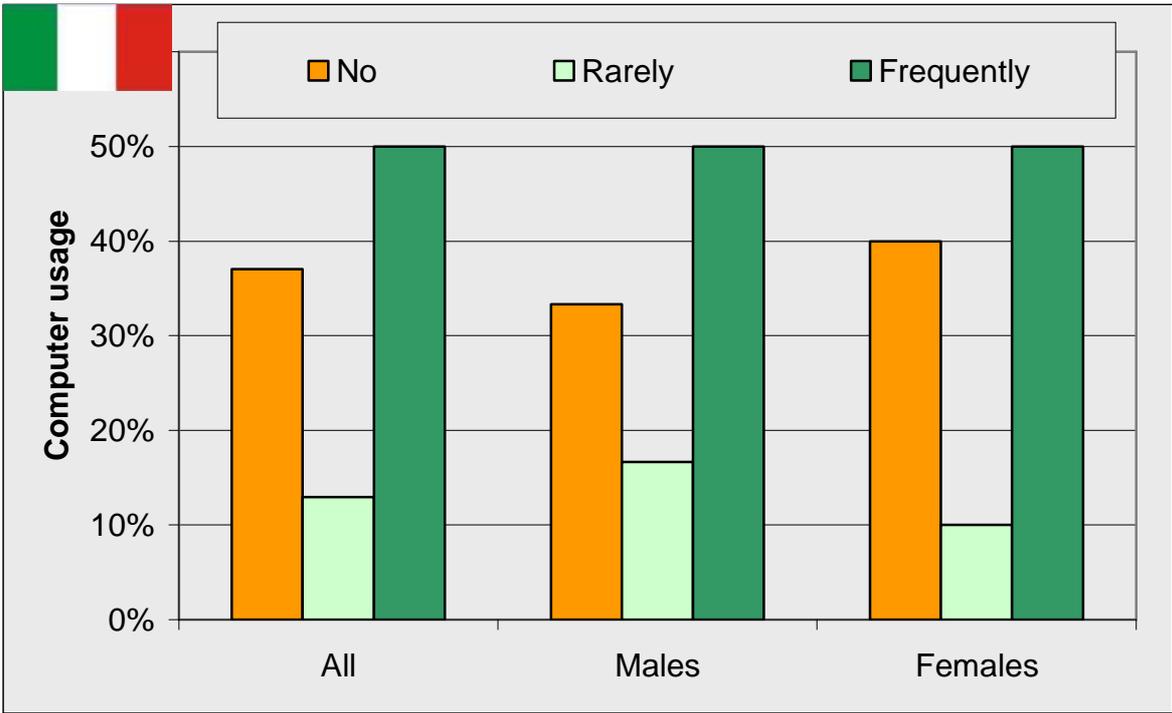


Figure 4.7d: Level of computer usage by respondents
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

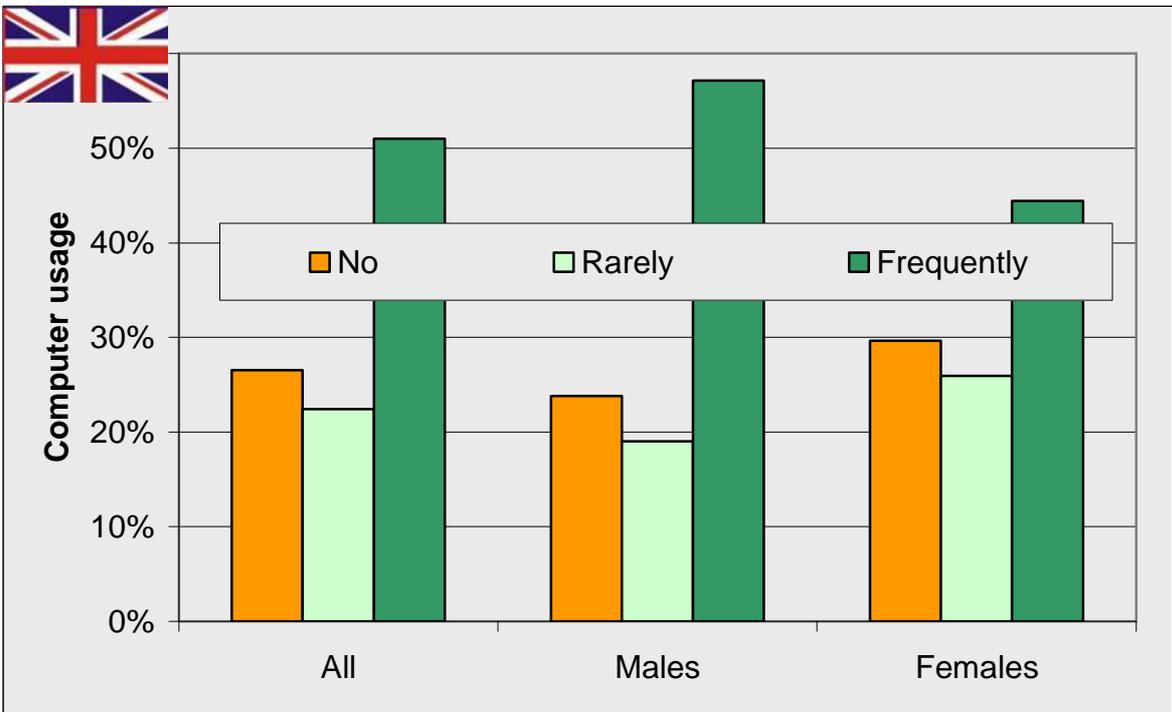


Figure 4.8a: Level of Internet usage by respondents
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

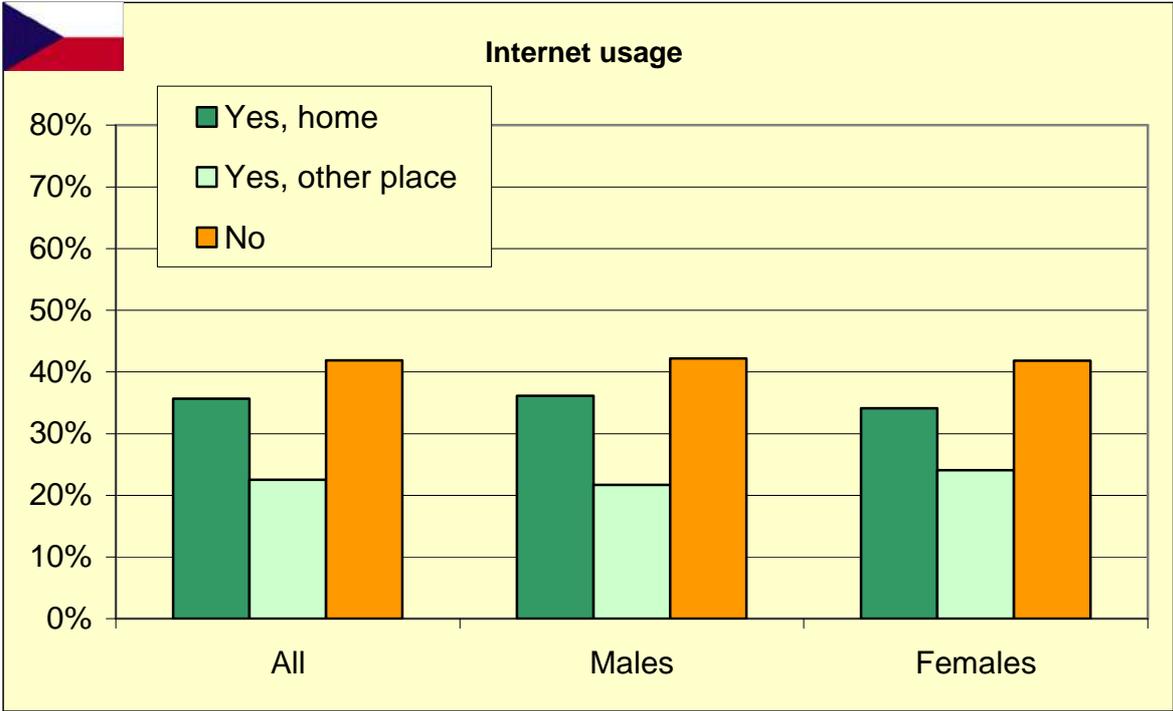


Figure 4.8b: Level of Internet usage by respondents
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

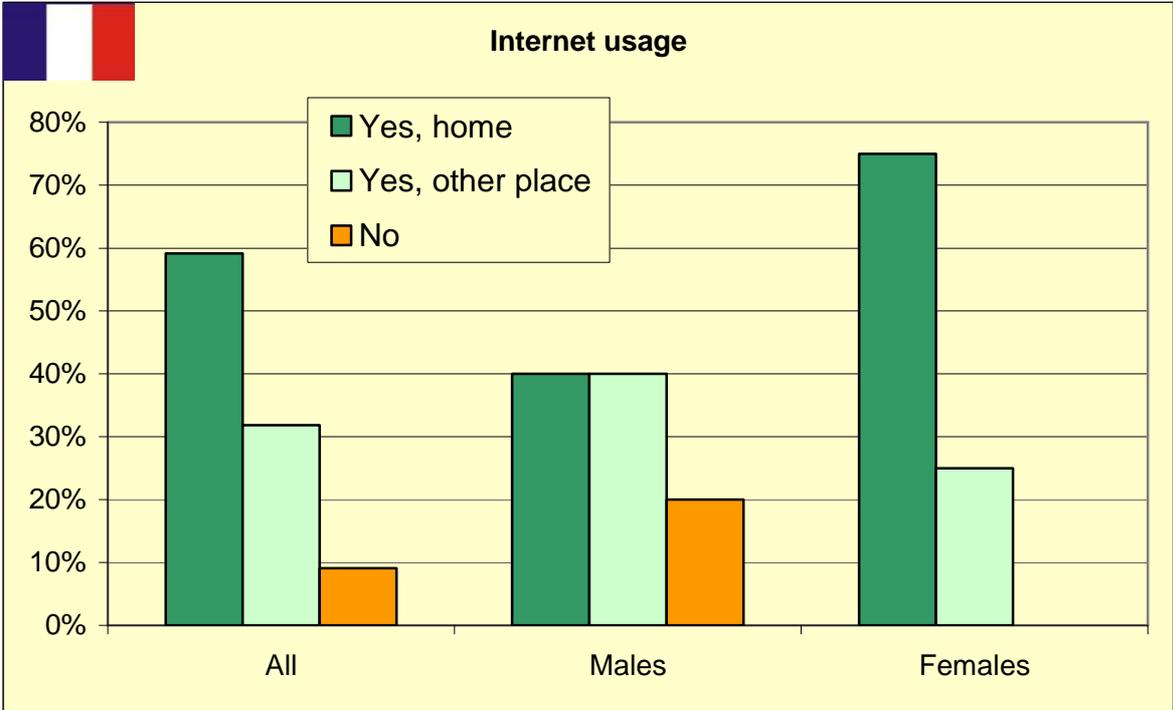


Figure 4.8c: Level of Internet usage by respondents
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

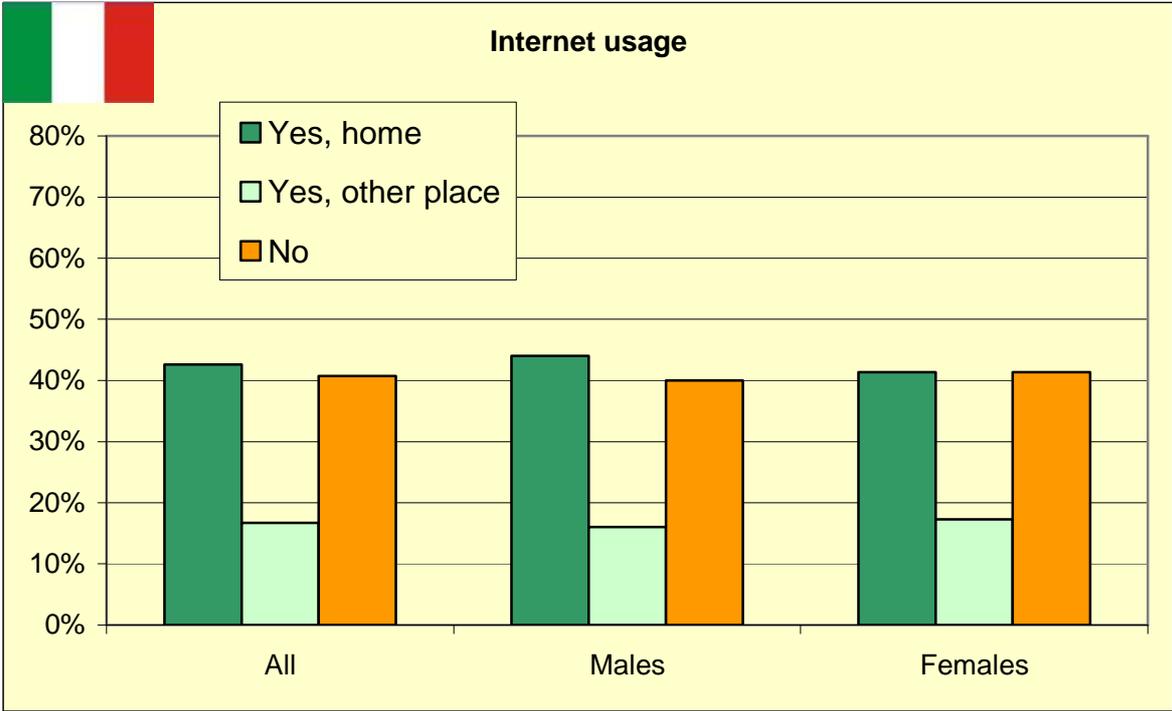


Figure 4.8d: Level of Internet usage by respondents
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

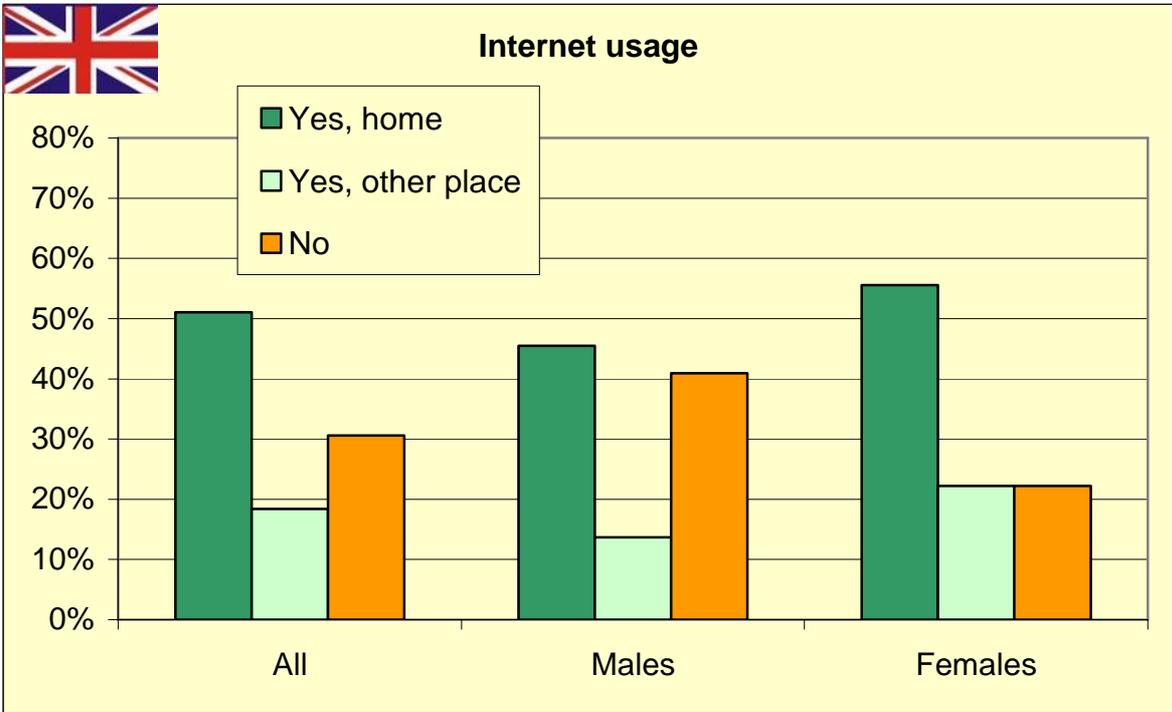


Figure 4.9a: Desired type of training
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

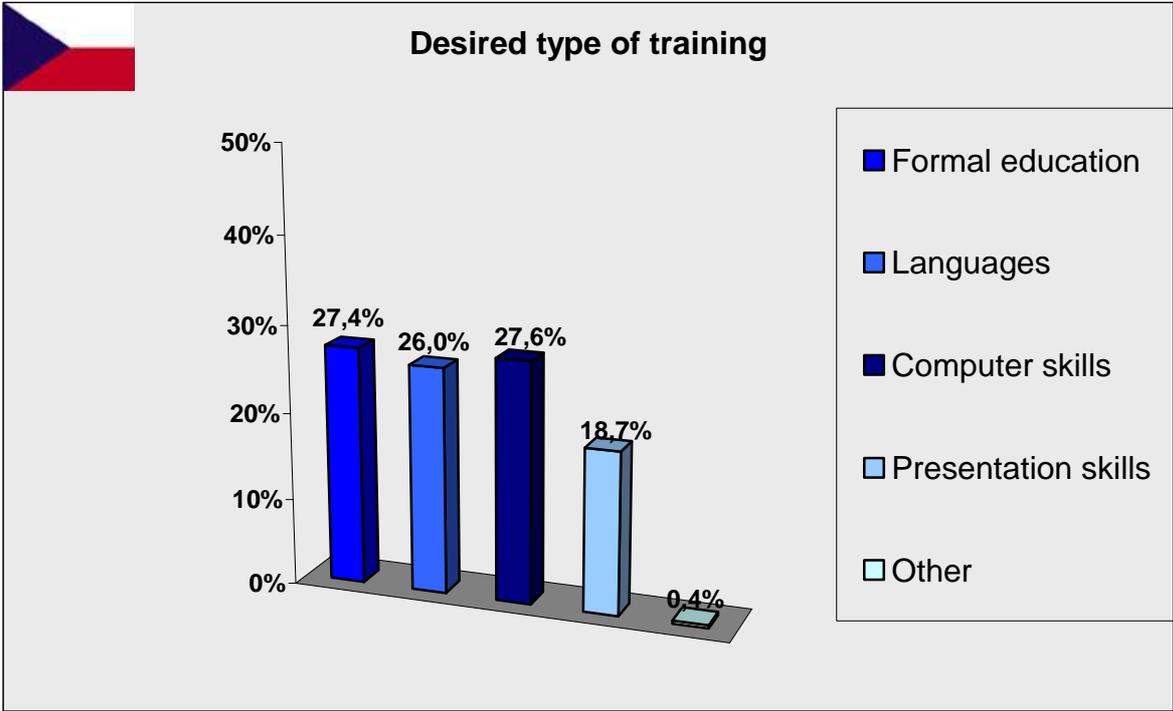


Figure 4.9b: Desired type of training
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

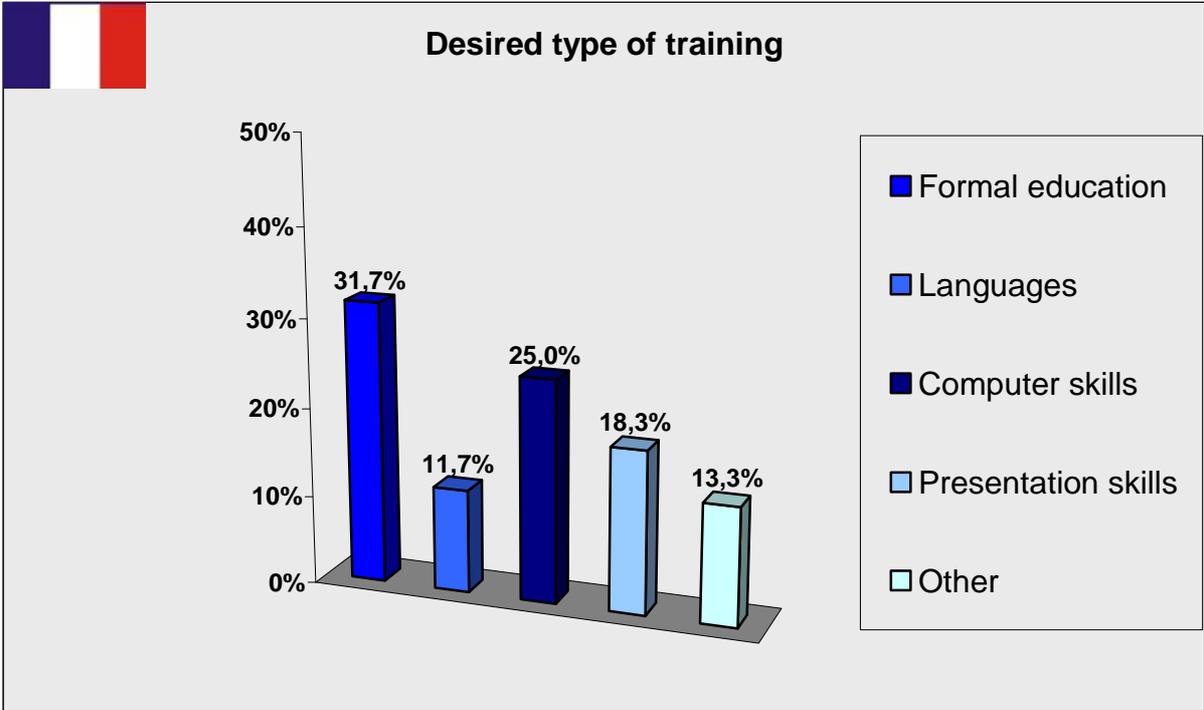


Figure 4.9c: Desired type of training
Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

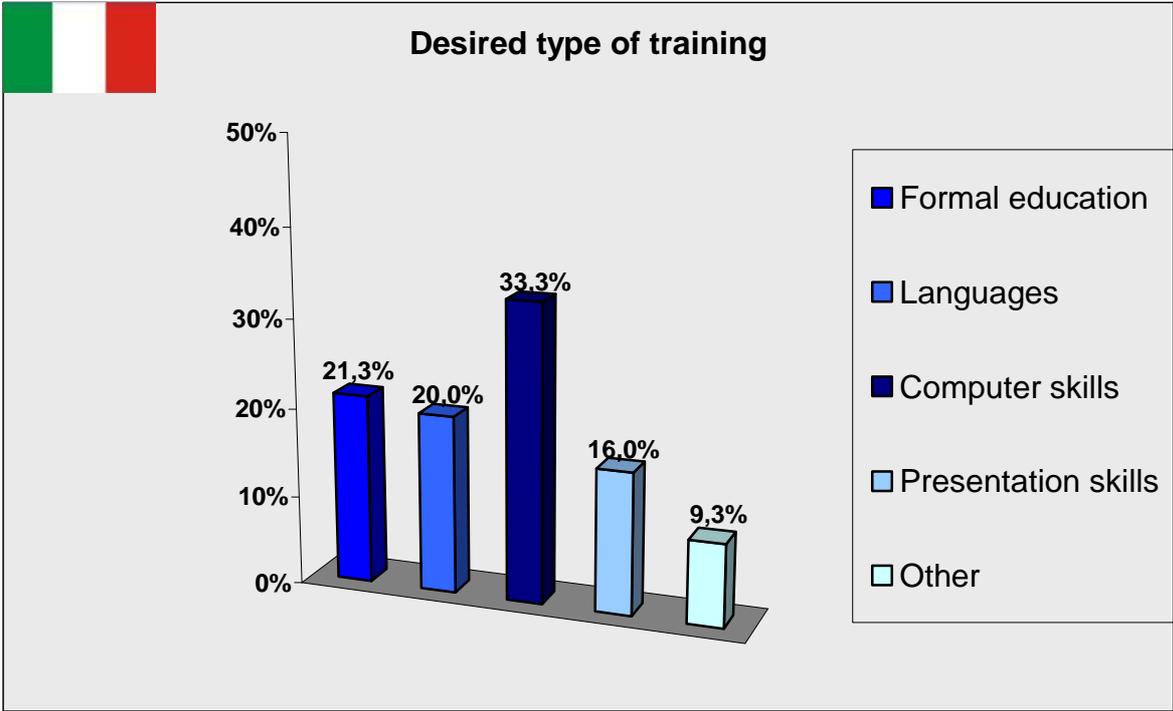


Figure 4.9d: Desired type of training
United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

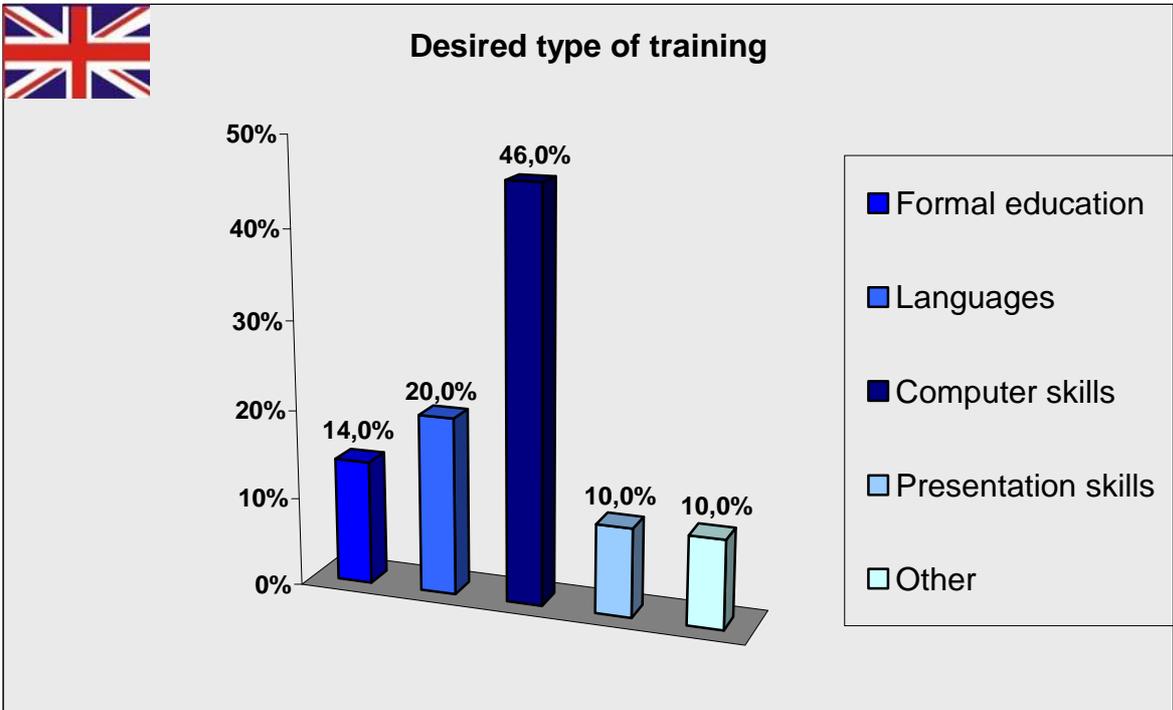


Figure 4.10a: Desired type of training by gender
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

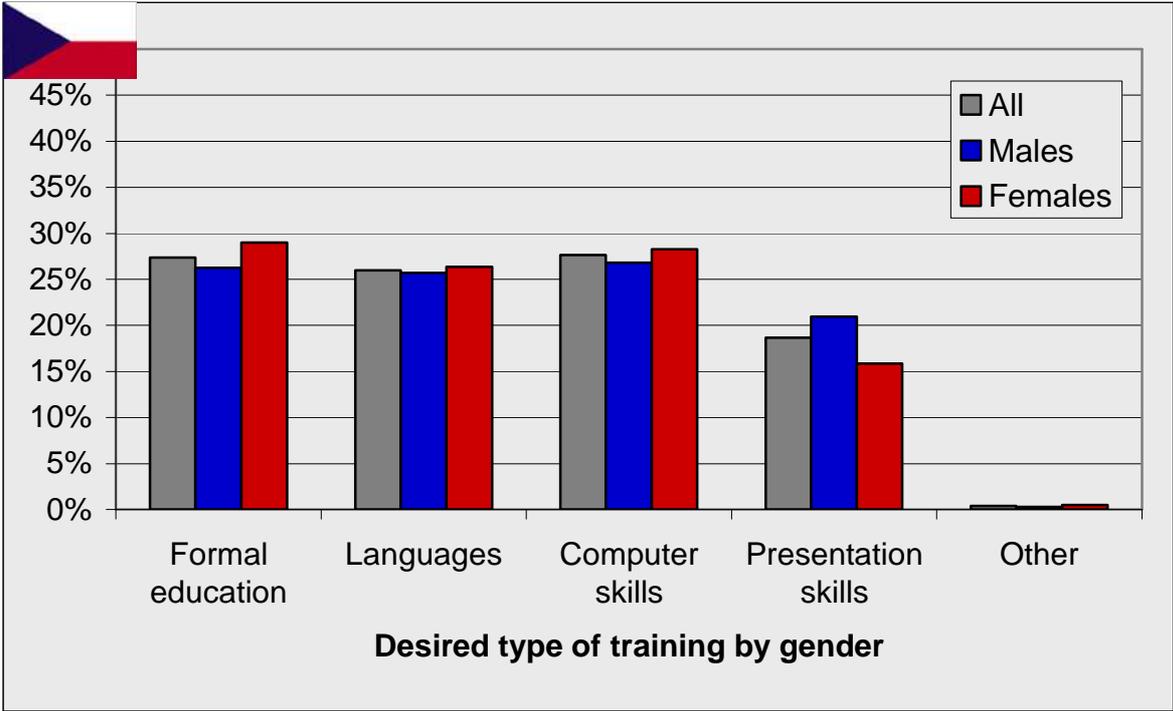


Figure 4.10b: Desired type of training by gender
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

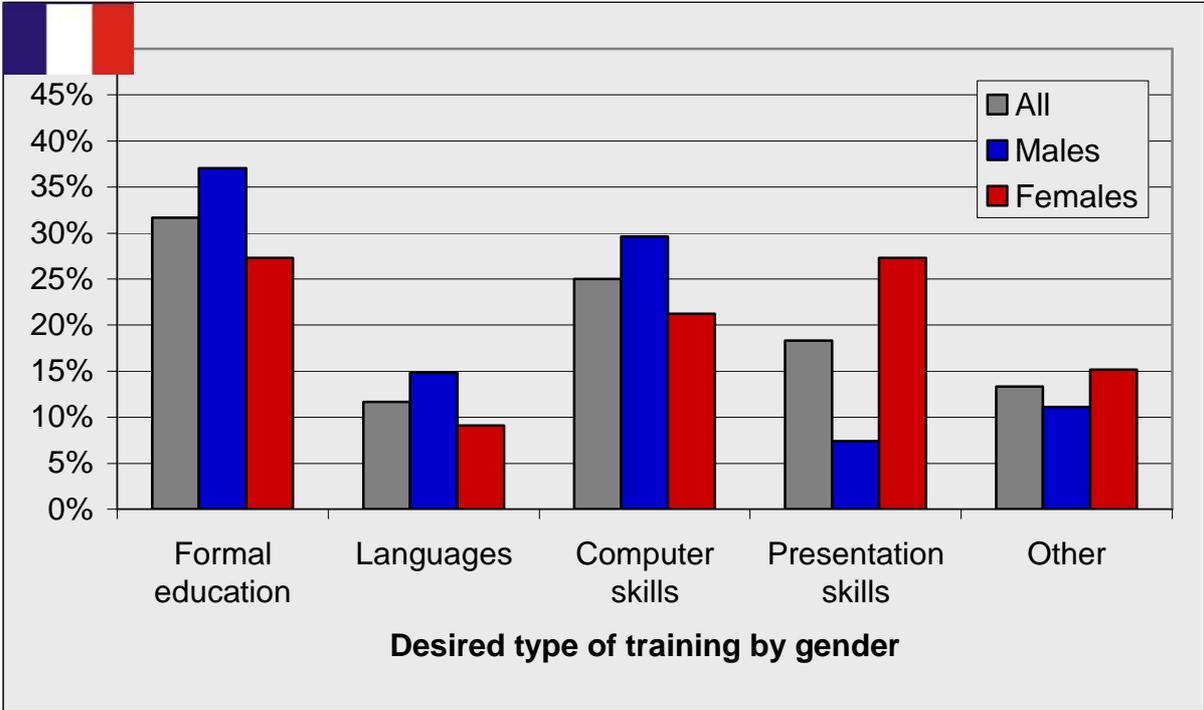


Figure 4.10c: Desired type of training by gender
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

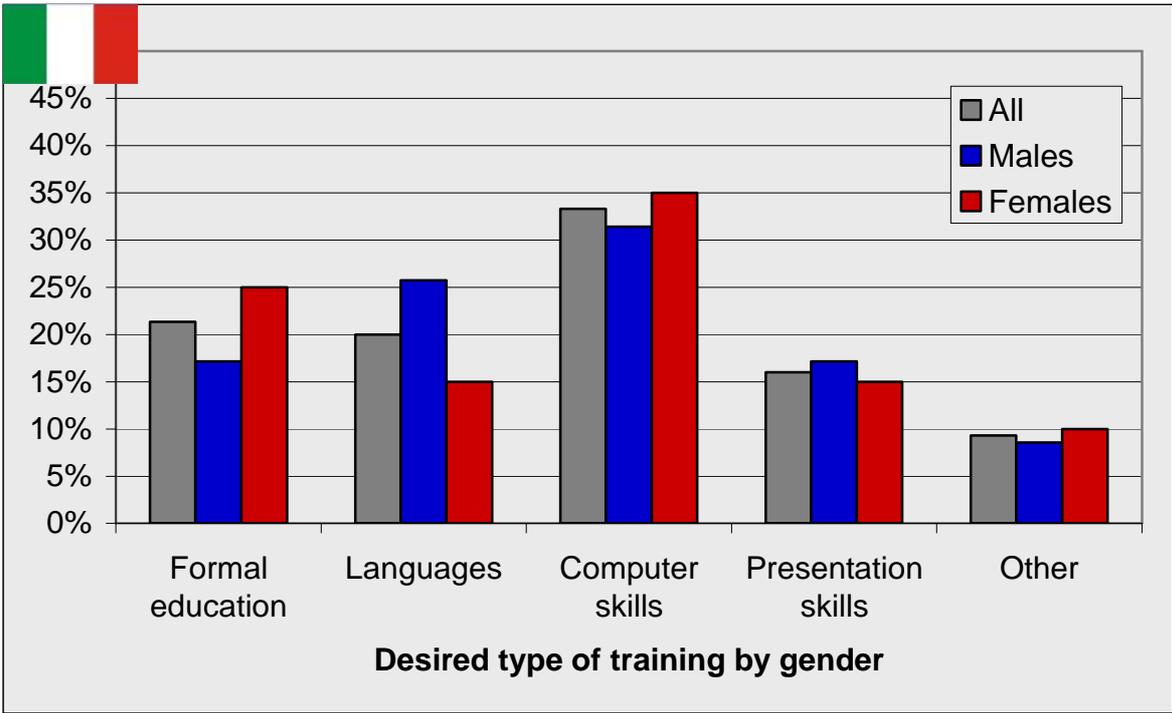


Figure 4.10d: Desired type of training by gender
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

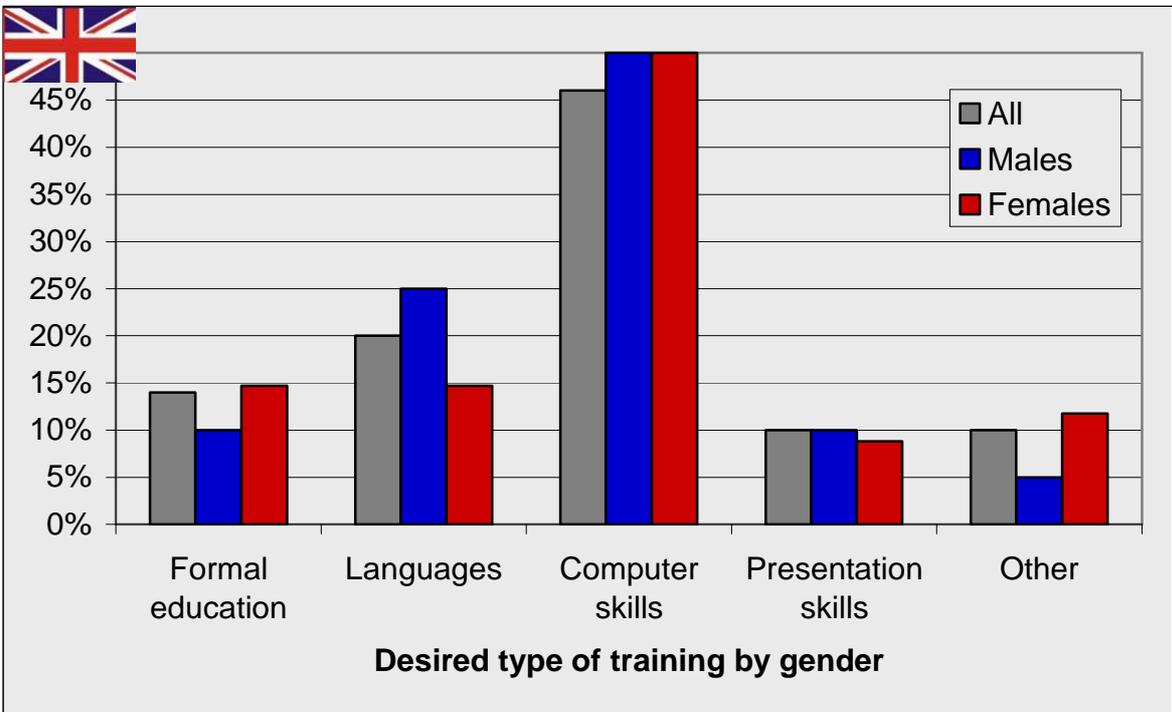


Figure 4.11a: Desired type of training by age
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

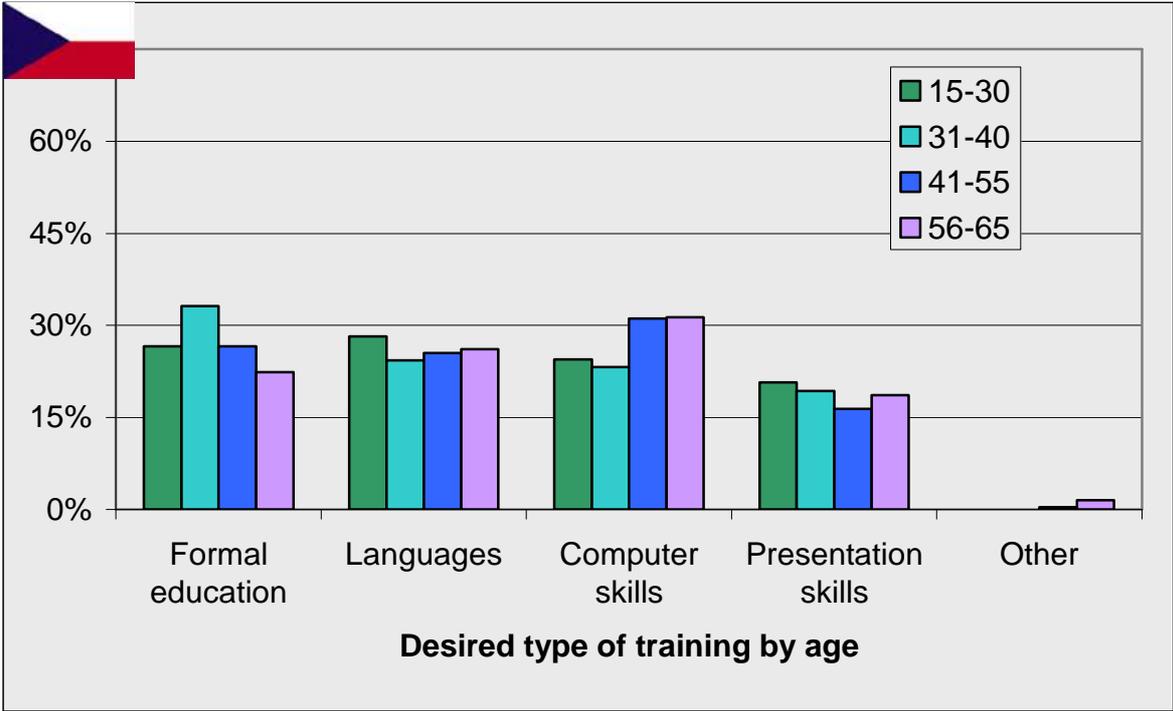


Figure 4.11b: Desired type of training by age
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

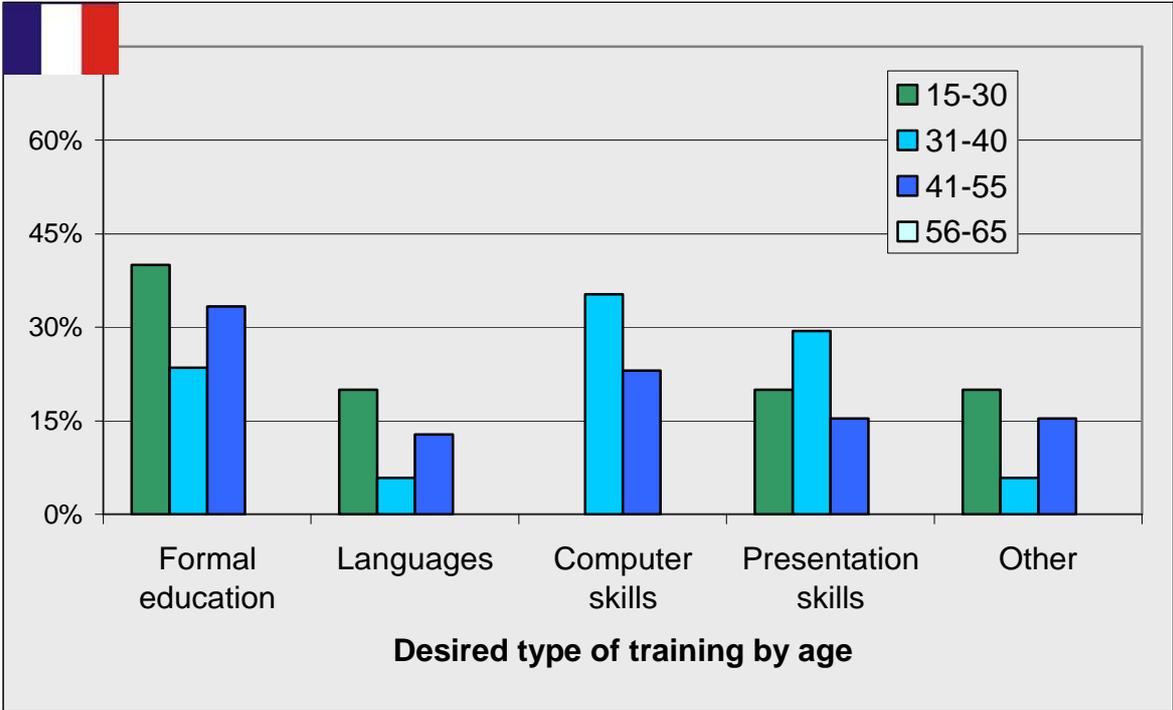


Figure 4.11c: Desired type of training by age
 Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

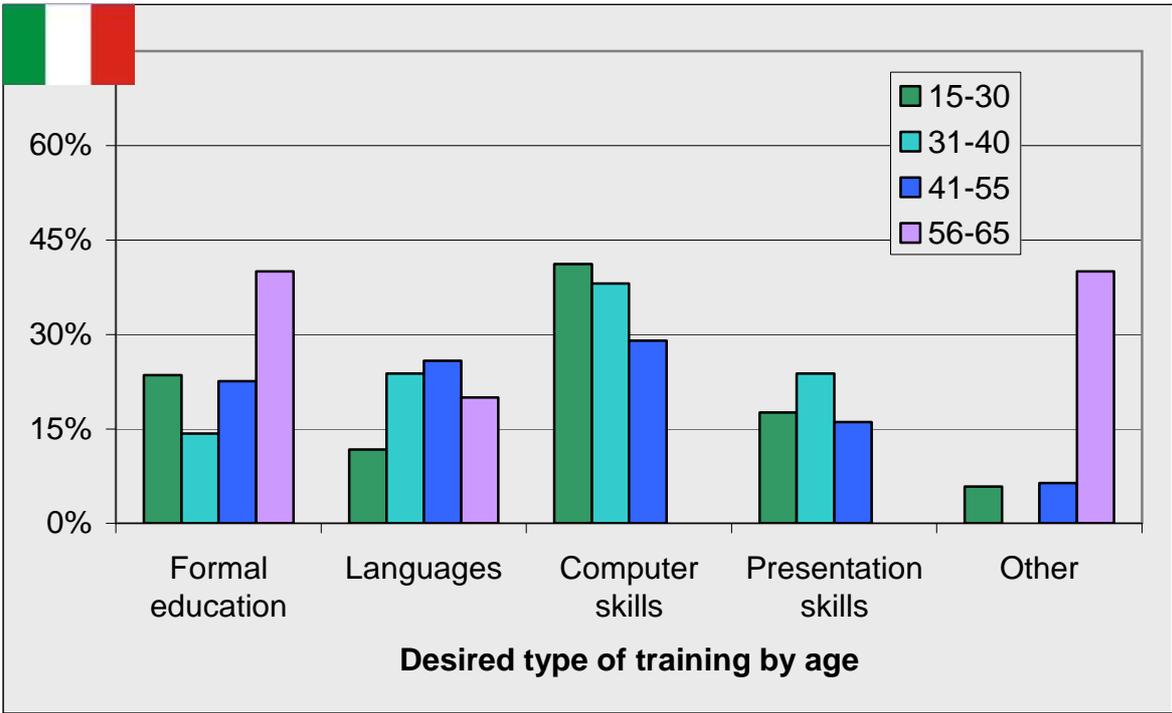


Figure 4.11d: Desired type of training by age
 United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area

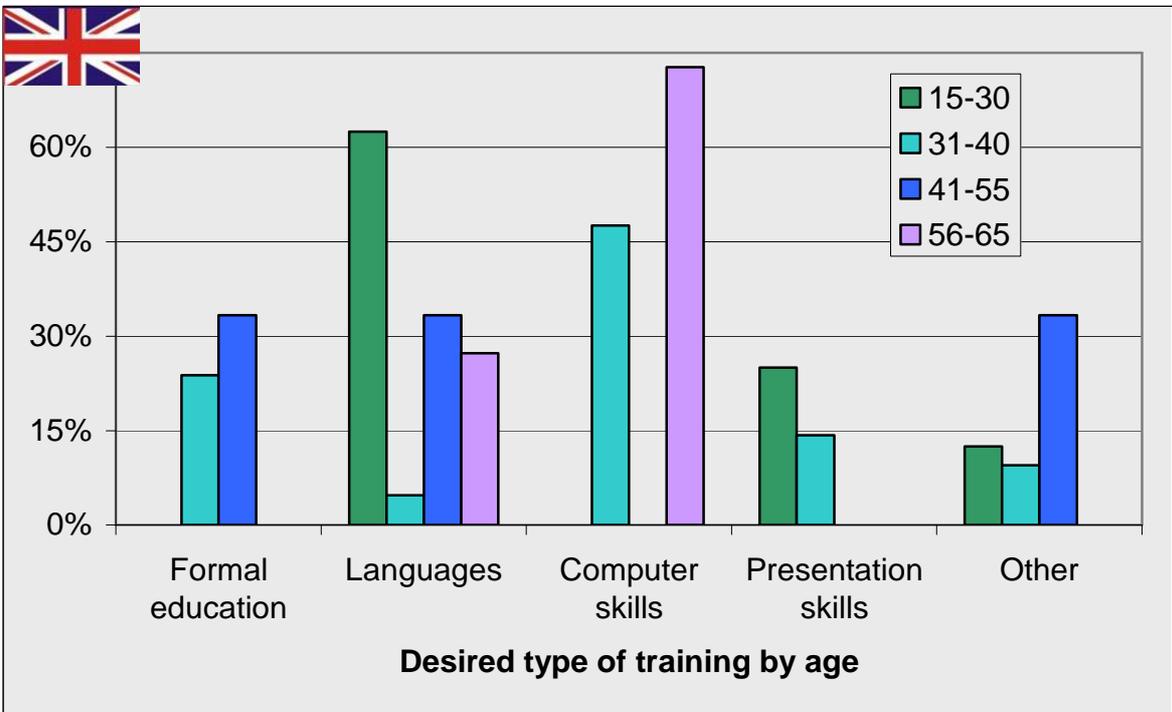


Figure 4.12a: Desired type of training by disability
Czech Republic – North, East and Central Bohemia

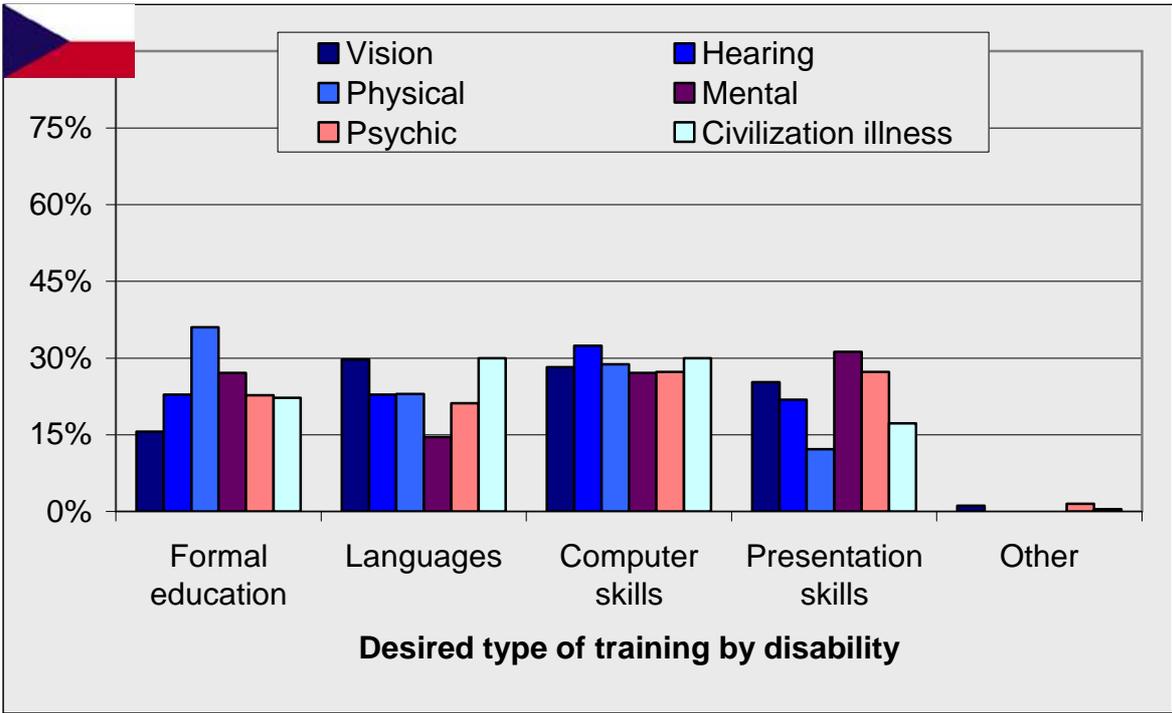


Figure 4.12b: Desired type of training by disability
France – Rhône-Alpes Region (Grenoble urban area)

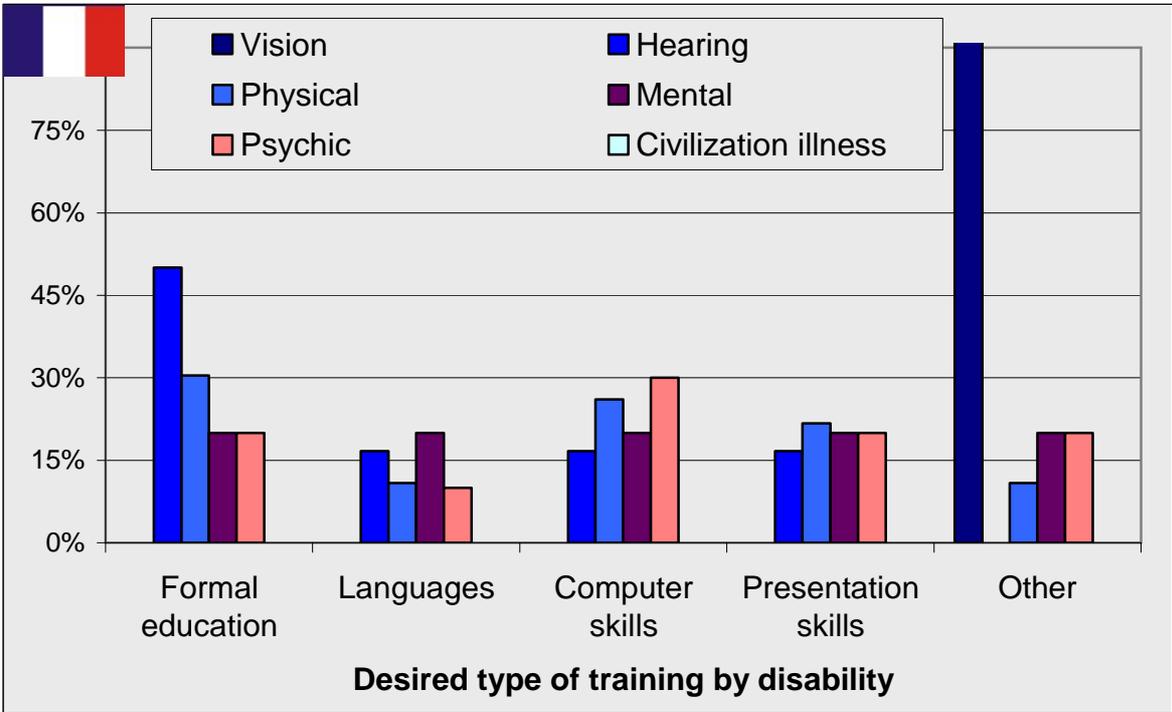


Figure 4.12c: Desired type of training by disability
Italy – Tuscany (Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Grosseto)

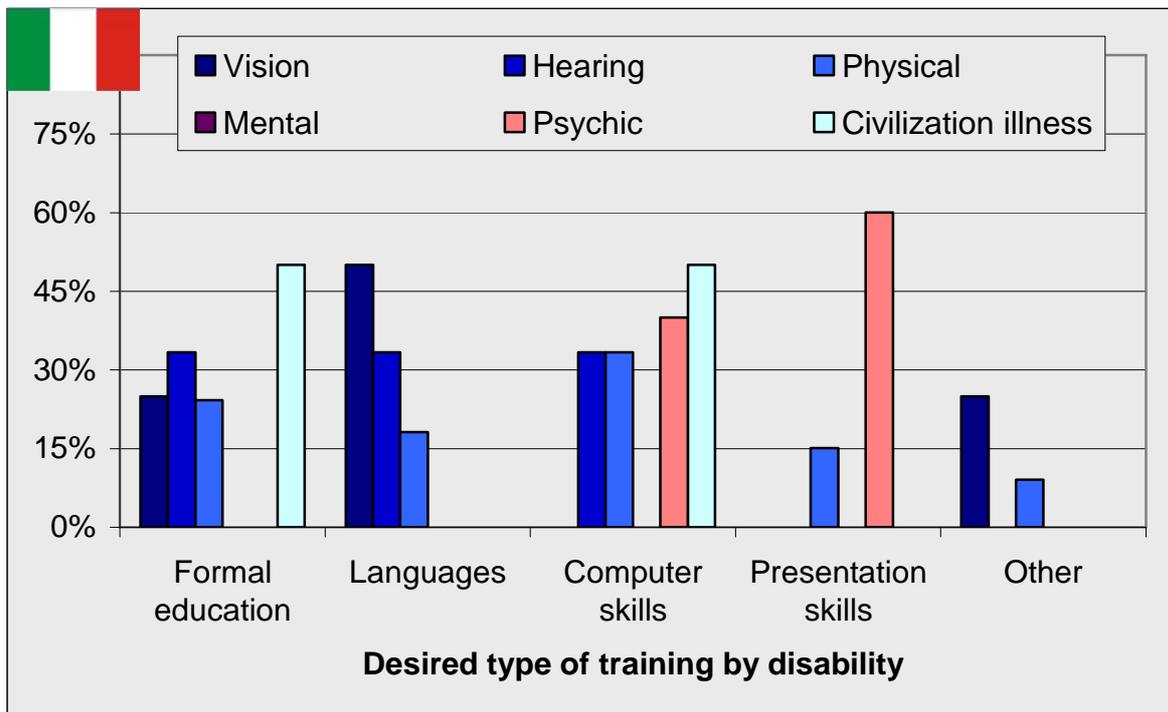
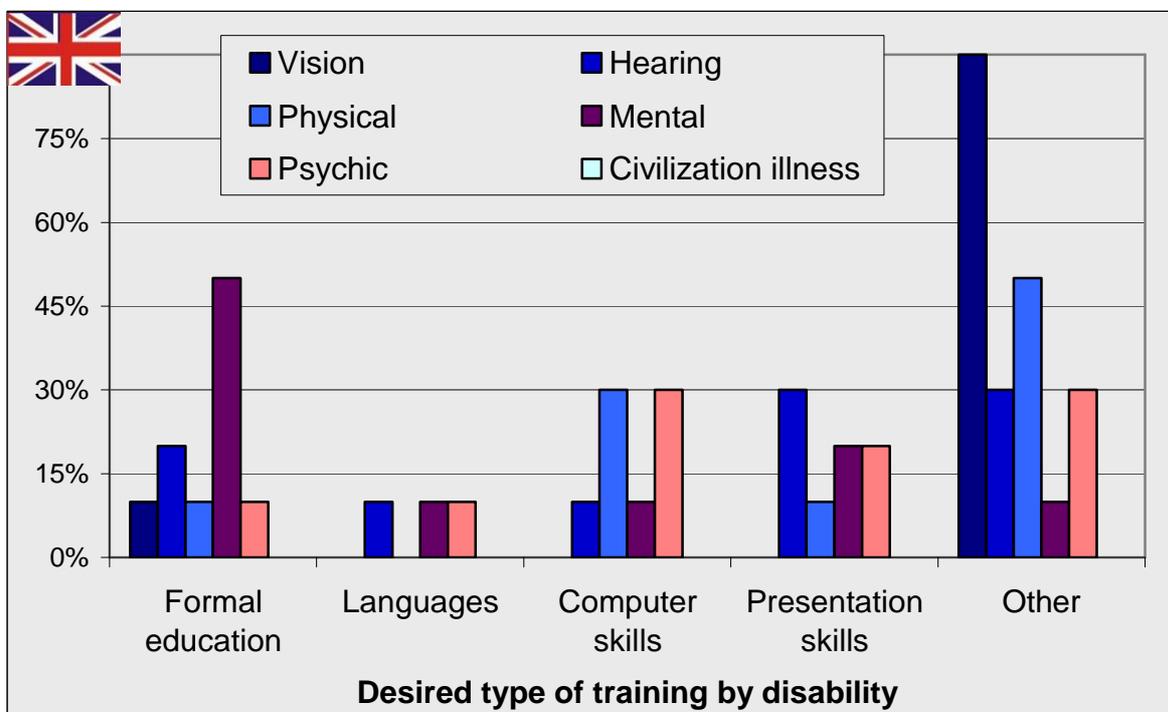


Figure 4.12d: Desired type of training by disability
United Kingdom – Greater Manchester area



4.3. Conclusions and comments on survey results

Panels 1 – 12 in the previous section 4.2. display various relations observed as a result of our sample surveys documenting the situation of disabled people on the labour market and their attitude towards training and life-long education.

Our study is a compilation of many research sources. Mostly, however, we used two types of data sources: large-scale surveys conducted by statistical bureaus in EU countries and our own sample surveys. Our own sample surveys or polls were able to provide us with focused data where larger surveys did not supply us with the necessary information. We should keep on mind that our own surveys represent only a tiny fraction of the total of the population surveyed (in total about 1 200 respondents). Thus they represent a mostly qualitative (reality) check of results obtained by large scale data collection. What we find important is the fact that nothing that we have learnt from our own data collection and processing work is in a contradiction with the information from large-scale surveys.

Here are some key points observed:

- Computer technology and Internet usage grows as these continue to become mainstream technologies in our wider society. The cost of both hardware and communication services went down significantly just in few last years. This is very significant for our target group which has less-than-average income.
- Despite this fact Czech population lags in using computer technology behind the other surveyed countries.
- Surveyed population of EU 15 countries is in total mostly keen on computer training. This demand is not so visible in Czech population, where training requests are spread more evenly over other possibilities.
- Czech population realizes usefulness of soft skills – a significant change from pre-accession attitude patterns.
- We observed that while learning computer skills disabled people tend to get deeper involved. The more they learned, the more they want to learn. This helps in closing the gap between the progress of the job market and their abilities to participate in it. At the same time, it may tend to open a wider gap between the EU 15 and Czech population because the EU 15 disabled population is according to our sampling in general more advanced in their computer skills.
- There is a need for better tailored training for disabled people to increase effectiveness of their training.
- Female population seems to handle better the impact of disability on their lives. This hypothesis may be formed on the basis of the fact that their overall economic activity is higher and they are better educated (ie. they continue their education while disabled).

5. Case studies and comments from target group members

5.1. Case Study – United Response

Based in Trafford, Manchester UR Consultants is a project run by the national disability charity United Response (UR) and staffed by consultants, designers and trainers with learning disabilities. Funded by Equal through ECUBE, the project involves working with Jobcentre Plus staff at the North West Disability Service to help them make their information more accessible for people with learning disabilities.

Breaking down barriers

Many organisations are aware that the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires them to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people. But some may not realise that one of the biggest barriers to inclusion and equality for many people with learning disabilities is information not being available in a way they want and understand. Making information more accessible can also benefit the thousands of people living in the UK who have difficulty with numeracy and literacy skills, as well as for whom English is not their first language.

Communication is a key

Through the translation project our team of consultants worked with Jobcentre Plus staff to help them make their leaflets easier to read. The consultants suggested a number of changes, including increasing font sizes, using shorter sentences, simplifying 'jargon' and adding pictures. The team selected pictures from a vast image library, choosing the picture that most clearly conveyed the meaning of the word. When a picture wasn't available, our designers helped to create one. Staff have found the experience of meeting people with learning disabilities particularly useful in helping them to understand the needs of their clients better. The project is also showing staff the importance of communicating effectively with someone with a learning disability. Feedback from Jobcentre Plus staff has been very encouraging with comments ranging from "It demonstrated how information is perceived differently" and "... made us realise how much jargon can confuse someone" to "...made us aware of how to communicate with different customers" and "Jobcentre Plus would benefit from the delivery of this training nationally". Long term, it is the intention to set up the project as a viable Social Enterprise, with all employees paid the rate for the job.

5.2. Case Study – The Case of Mrs. G.

G. is 30 years old and has physical and psychological handicap. Despite these problems she successfully attended high school and got a high school leaving certificate as a tourist operator.

Looking for a job, she took advantage of a regional call for a 200-hour computer qualification course, after which she got the basic ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence): this course was aimed at training professionals to be able to manage and implement integrated information systems of SME (small and medium enterprises), with particular reference to e-commerce.

In 2004 the Local Employment Service, after an interview aimed at achieving a proper assessment of her attitudes and professional abilities, proposed her a stage as secretary in a local association for 6 months within the IC Equal, which included also a monthly benefit in order to allow her to be self-sufficient.

The goal of this Equal project, called "Coast Revitalization", was the implementation of a network which allowed a simpler matching of job supply and demand, thanks to stages in local enterprises, in order to favour disadvantaged groups to find a job.

The aim of this specific stage was mainly to learn how to interact with people in general and in particular with colleagues, young people like she is, and associates. The context in general, where she worked, could be considered "young" and this favoured her because it simplified relationships and interactions. The project she was involved in did not require to previously collect personal information like how serious was her psychological handicap. It was however evident that, definitely, this experience allowed her to gain autonomy and self-esteem. According to her tutor, she constantly showed herself very involved in her duties and evolved in terms of efforts and results.

Thanks to the ECDL and this work experience, she has been presently working as supporting secretary with a local authority.

5.3. Case Study – The Case of Mr. M.

M. is 26 years old and suffers legs paralysis. He is a very intelligent and smart boy and regularly accomplished his studies and got a school leaving certificate in Accountancy and Commercial Technique at the local Commercial High School. Moreover, he got his driving licence and habitually drives a special car for non walking people.

Shortly after leaving the school, thanks to the local "youth information centre" he attended a 700-hour computer qualification course (with special attention to data base management and web designing), after which, however, he spent about 6 months looking for a job, until the Professional Training Office of the Province proposed him a stage within the Equal project called "Coast Revitalization" (implementation of a network which allowed a simpler matching of job supply and demand, thanks to stages in local enterprises, in order to favour disadvantaged groups to find a job).

He was supposed to work as receptionist for 6 months in the same trade association where he attended the computer course. In fact during the course he had immediately showed a very impressive acquaintance with computer, so the stage could allow him to improve his knowledge and made him more autonomous and sure. This stage also included a monthly benefit in order to allow him to be self-sufficient.

He immediately demonstrated to be able to respect all tasks and timetables and that was the ultimate goal of the stage. Moreover, all his colleagues were well disposed toward him and he felt comfortable.

Another aim was also to learn how to interact with people in general and in particular with clients and associates, not only with colleagues. He demonstrated, once more, to be well disposed to interpersonal relationship and he found himself comfortable in this situation.

Thanks to a special Italian law, that on one side obliges firms with more than 15 employees to engage a disabled, and on the other allows the same firms to benefit from tax relief, M. at the end of the stage, was engaged with non-temporary full time work.

5.4. Case Study – The Case of Kevin C.

Kevin C is an 18 years old youth suffering from intellectual deficiency, due to that disability he has a very low level of qualification. His goal was to work in a restaurant but his education records were too weak to permit him to go in an apprenticeship.

OPCAREG Disabled workers department met him with his parents, he knew that he needed further training in order to work in a restaurant but didn't know how to manage to obtain it due to his low level of qualification. OPCAREG Disabled workers department proposed him a two steps approach, first a training specialized for people with a very low level of qualification for six months followed by a specific training for restaurant workers. He managed to find a restaurant accepting him with the help of his specialized school (IMPRO).

The SEP or Training for Professional Experience was a 6 months contracts, with part of time in training centre and part of time at work. To benefit from this heavily subsidised program, the Restaurant took the engagement to keep him in "contract of professionalisation" after the SEP. The contract is only open to qualifying trainings excluding those with a put back to elementary level goal. In January, after the six months Kevin was able to follow the courses of the vocational training centre in order to obtain a qualification of "skilled restaurant worker". He signed a "contract of professionalisation" with the same restaurant.

The vocational training centre adapted his training in order to permit him to access to the training. This "Contract of professionalisation" allows him to pursue his vocational training while having a part time job in this restaurant. This way is actually the best to obtain a vocational training and a professional experience at the same time.

OPCAREG Disabled workers department will sign its 1000th "contract of professionalisation" this summer.

5.5. Case Study – The Case of Mrs. I.

Age: 51 years old

Status: widow

Education: primary school

Nationality: Czech

Health problems: a latent obstructional lung illness (from 2004), diabetes, high pressure, rheumatism (arthritis), heavy hypofunction of the thyroid gland.

Mrs. I. lives in a small village in the Czech Republic. She is a widow, 51 years old. After finishing the primary school education she worked as a workwoman at a flow line, later as a press operator, a sewer or a cleaning woman. She is very interested in cooking; she is very skilful and creative. She was recommended by her local job centre to join the course funded by ESF.

Before starting the ESF course she did not have any knowledge of computers, she was two years without a job, very depressive. Mrs. I. had very low level of self-confidence and a very pessimistic attitude. Because of her many health problems she could do just light work, only daily shifts, could stay only in good conditions (warm, dry places).

She started to attend the ESF course on the 5th of February 2007. She never missed a lesson and absorbed all the information with determination. She has made a big progress in her computer skills (started with no clue of Internet or Word) and by the end of the course she was able to use internet, email or MS Offices excellently. Using computers became a part of her daily life - nowadays our company receives her emails how the course has changed her life:

„Thank you for the friendly attitude you had, for the understanding and patience, for individual access to all of us. Thanks to the course I have found optimism which I lost long ago... I can say that the course gave me a lot and gained experience helped me with finding a job. It is a 100% merit of the course that I have found it because if I had not participated in it I would have never found a self-confidence and I would have been afraid of managing anything. You have opened my eyes and I thank you from my heart...”

Mrs. I. finished the ESF course very much changed. Besides her new skills with computers she got self-confidence and optimism. It was a new starting point in her life. From April 2007 she started to work as a service woman at a petrol station. Now she is full of energy because she again started to believe in herself, in her abilities and skills.

6. Reflections and suggestions

This is a study focused on continuing education. There are other studies produced by the other M2E study groups to deal with other employment issues of disabled people:

- IAG group - work integration of disabled people
- Best arguments for employment of disabled people, aimed at employers
- ICT group – using technology to secure access to information and training for disabled people
- Gender mainstreaming to secure gender equality of opportunities.

From data presented in this study it is clear that the position of disabled people on the labour markets of EU is very difficult. The position of disabled people is worse than their counterparts' without disabilities. However not only negative developments are observed in this respect. More and more positive examples of good practice are well documented. The question is whether these can be considered a beginning of a systematic change – a trend – or not.

Philosophies of the social model of disability and life-long learning go hand in hand. Both concepts promote pro-active approach and emphasize control over passivity. Adopting this model of disability should then also mean embracing life-long learning as one of the tools to fight discrimination of disabled people.

Disabled people realize they need more training and/or education. They understand its importance and are willing to learn. The important difference from the general population in this respect is that disabled people are less educated at the beginning.

Learning computer usage and soft skills are excellent self-confidence builders for our target group. They can see positive results very fast. This has a profoundly positive effect on someone out of job for months or even years. Thus it helps people also in another respect - people gain more confidence to go back to the job market.

Technology has an enormous potential to make up for physical disabilities and even the chances of disabled people in seeking employment on the job market with the general population.

Limits of life-long learning potential are mostly set by the motivation and will of disabled individuals. They do not have that much control over any other tool for fighting their job market discrimination. Therefore life-long learning may be considered to be an ideal tool of empowerment of disabled people.

Organizations and institutions who work with our target group members can hopefully utilize the results of our study as a valuable tool for engaging and motivating their clients along the path to their work integration.

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Appendix: The questionnaire for the sample survey

1. Your age

- 1) 15 - 30 yrs.
- 2) 31 - 40 yrs.
- 3) 41 - 55 yrs.
- 4) 56 - 65 yrs.

2. Your gender

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

3. Your highest completed education

- 1) Elementary unfinished
- 2) Elementary (basic)
- 3) High school (secondary)
- 4) College or university

4. Foreign languages you actively use (do not mark your native language)

- 1) English
- 2) German
- 3) French
- 4) Russian
- 5) Spanish
- 6) Other -

5. Do you use a personal computer?

- 1) No, I do not
- 2) Yes, but rarely – at most once a week
- 3) Yes, frequently – several times a week

6. Mark all SW packages you can use:

- 1) Text editor, such as MS Word
- 2) Spreadsheet, such as MS Excel
- 3) Database, such as MS Access
- 4) Internet and e-mail
- 5) Other -

7. Do you have access to the Internet?

- 1) Yes, at home
- 2) Not at home, but I can access it regularly other place
- 3) Neither at home, nor any other place on regular basis.

8. Please mark all types of your disability:

- 1) Vision
- 2) Hearing
- 3) Physical
- 4) Mental
- 5) Psychic
- 6) Civilization illness

9. Do you receive any medical retirement benefits?

- 1) Yes, I receive full medical retirement benefits.
- 2) Yes, I receive partial medical retirement benefits
- 3) No

10. Which of the following describes your current situation?

- 1) I am fully employed
- 2) I am self-employed

- 3) I am partially employed
- 4) I am unemployed
- 5) I am unemployed and registered at job centre

11. Please mark all types of training that can, in your opinion, improve your chances on the job market

- 1) Higher degree of formal education (vocational, high school, university)
- 2) Languages
- 3) Computer skills
- 4) Communication and presentation skills
- 5) Other:.....

