Oxford Age Friendly Creative Consultation Report

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Introduction

In 2019 Age UK Oxfordshire's Age Friendly Creative Network was awarded funding from Oxford City Council's Culture Fund to support delivery of an Age Friendly Creative Consultation in Oxford City. The consultation aimed to focus on people who may not have easy access to cultural activities in order to examine barriers that people may face when trying to access cultural experiences, find out what type of cultural activities people would like to see developed and find out what support might be useful to enable greater participation. The Oxfordshire Age Friendly Creative Network was developed in response to the Age UK report Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life report, advocating for an increase in cross sector partnership working in order to support older people with multiple barriers to cultural engagement, to take part locally.

The consultation targeted Oxford City because there is a high density of cultural providers and professional resources which presents opportunities for future partnership working. The specific areas of Oxford that formed the focus of the study were Barton and Sandhills, Carfax, Churchill, Northfield Brook, Rose Hill, St Clements and St Mary's in Oxford City. These areas were chosen because they are perceived as having less cultural provision comparable to other areas in the city.

The consultation aimed to seek opinions directly from groups of older people. As a result of the consultation, we have both qualitative and quantitative data that will us enable to work with cultural partners to build on existing provision to develop age friendly cultural experiences in Oxford that reflect the needs and aspirations of the older population who live in the City. At the time of the consultation the Covid 19 crisis and subsequent lockdown had not been fully realised. It is likely that these factors will an impact on age friendly cultural provision, so this has been taken into account when examining the findings and making recommendations.

Arts Council England's research survey Older People Arts and Culture shows that 76 % of older people say that arts and culture is important to making them feel happy, however 38% of older people find it is more difficult to attend or take part in arts and cultural events or activities now compared to when they were younger. Figures suggest that once you reach 60 years of age you are less likely to take part in the arts, and this is mirrored in recent research published in the museums sector The UK's Ageing Population: Challenges and Opportunities for Museums and Galleries, with the lowest rates of museum and gallery visits in the over 75's age group. But interestingly, Age UK's Index of Wellbeing in Later Life research shows that 'creative and cultural participation' is the number one influencing factor on an individual's sense of wellbeing in older age.

What methodologies were used for the Oxford Age Friendly Creative Consultation?

In the first instance we consulted with colleagues at Oxford City Council, the Oxford City Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for older people and colleagues from Age UK Oxfordshire Community Information Team who work in communities within Oxford City. We also approached some of our partners at Community Centres, Sheltered Housing schemes and older people's groups. This enabled us to identify groups to take part in the consultation. The nine groups who kindly agreed to take part in the consultation were Barton Bingo group (based at Barton Neighbourhood Centre), Age UK Chip and Chat group (based at Wood Farm Youth Centre), Clockhouse Phoenix Rising Group (based at Clockhouse Community Centre in Greater Leys), Dementia Oxfordshire Memory Café (based at Shotover View Shelter Housing Scheme) Donnington 50+ group (based at Donnington Community Centre), Hogley Bogstars (based at Bullingdon Community Centre), Oxford 50+ Network (based at Oxford Town Hall), Potters Court Sheltered Housing Scheme (based in Greater Leys) and Silver Threads group (based at Rosehill Community Centre).

We also had a presence at Healthfest at the Warnford Hospital in September 2019 and Oxford International Older Peoples Day event at Oxford Town Hall in October 2019 where the vote for your favorite activity on a post it note was offered.

Over 100 participants actively contributed to the consultation via the nine group meetings and at community events. A range of consultation methods were used including a presentation to set the scene, a questionnaire, selecting a favorite activity on a post it note, group discussions and the opportunity to try a creative activity. Each group selected from the consultation methods with some groups participating in all and others choosing those that were most suited to the setting and the time available group. The creative activities were making a Christmas decorations (for pre-Christmas groups) and clay modelling (for post-Christmas groups).

Creative categories that were used in the questionnaire where similar to those used in the Age UK report *Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life* report to enable us to draw comparisons with the broader picture. We added a digital arts section to the questionnaire which has offered some interesting insights into digital engagement with creativity and culture. We would like to say a big thank you to all the groups and participant who engaged with the consultation.

What were the quantitative findings? (See appendix 1 P10)

The majority of the participants where female (76%).

Just over half lived alone (58%) and were in the 75+ yrs. age range at (60%).

The top 5 activities that participants were currently engaged with were; (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement).

1. Reading for pleasure (43)
2. Visiting historic parks or gardens (35)
3. Visiting a museum (33)
4. Attending films (30)
5. Visiting towns or cities with historic character (28)

The top 5 activities that participants were NOT currently engaged with were but would be of interest; (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement)

1. Using a computer to create original art (20)
2. Taking part in local history research and being a member a book club (17 each)
3. Writing stories, plays or poetry (16)
4. Attending events connected to books and literature, visiting a place connected to industrial heritage, taking part in reminiscence activities and using an app to access a heritage website (15 each)
5. Becoming a member of a creative writing group, attending a play at another venue, visiting a historic place of worship, visiting a site of archaeological interest visiting a multi arts centre and event which included video or electronic art (14 each)

The most popular activity that participants were NOT currently engaged with were but would be of interest by postcode area (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement).

OX1 – Recycled craft (4)

OX2-Using a computer to create original art (4)

OX3- Attending a rock, pop or jazz concert, participation in dance including ballet and using a computer to create original art (7 each)

OX4-Attending a play at another venue including outdoors (11)

The top 5 barriers to attending were (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement).

1. I don't want to go out after dark (30)
2. No transport of my own (25)
3. I have health concerns (24)
4. I don't want to go out on my own (20)
5. I don't know what is on offer (16)

The top 5 favourites creative activities voted for in post it note activity (participants used their own words for this and numbers in brackets indicates the number of participants who chose each activity).

1. Dance (11)
2. Painting a drawing and reading and literature (10 each)
3. Knitting and crochet (9)
4. Sewing (8)
5. Theatre (6)

What were the qualitative findings? (See appendix 2 P21 and 3 P26)

Key themes emerged from the response to Q9 and 10 of the questionnaire and the group discussions as follows (Q9-Please share your thoughts on what local cultural or arts organisations can do to support you to attend their activities and events and Q10-Please use this page to share your any other thoughts that you have about the age friendly arts and cultural offer in Oxford including any experiences you have had, both positive and negative).

- Many respondents were keen for activities to take place in their community and had a strong affinity for the centre where their group meets
- Daytime activities were also cited as a preference by some respondents
- It was felt that there is a need for better publicity, and some expressed a preference physical copies of information rather than digital
- Some respondents felt that organisations need to be mindful of numbers in groups and how this can be managed if the group becomes popular
- Some respondents expressed a desire for someone to go with them to groups

These themes were reinforced in the group discussions;

- There were concerns about going out after dark and a preference for activities to be more locally based
- An outreach visit from cultural provider based in Oxford City Centre had been very much enjoyed and had given the group confidence to travel to the city centre to visit the venue
- There was a desire for clear, accessible and up to date promotion of events both in print and digitally

What conclusions can we draw from the findings and what are next steps?

Although relativity small in scope the Oxford City Age Friendly Creative Consultation echoed findings from national research in Age UK report Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life . Activities like reading, visiting historic parks or gardens, visiting museums where cited as most popular in both studies and we know that these are freely available in Oxford. The consultation findings suggest that activities that may not be as freely available or perceived as freely available but are of interest include using a computer to create digital art, local history research, belonging to a book club and writing stories, plays and poetry. We also need to take into account the favourite activities voted for by participants including dance, painting and drawing, reading and literature, knitting and crochet, sewing and attending the theatre. Another strong message that came across from the consultation participants was a strong desire for creative activities to be taken out into the community and happen at the centres where they meet. This is in accord with the Arts Councils recently published Arts Council 10 Year Strategy-2020-2030 which also makes a case for arts and culture to be taken out onto the community and states;

"By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences"

Taking all of the findings into account and also the current circumstances regarding Covid 19, the lockdown and the inevitable loss of confidence in that people may feel in going to group activities for the foreseeable future the following ideas may be suitable for consideration for project development.

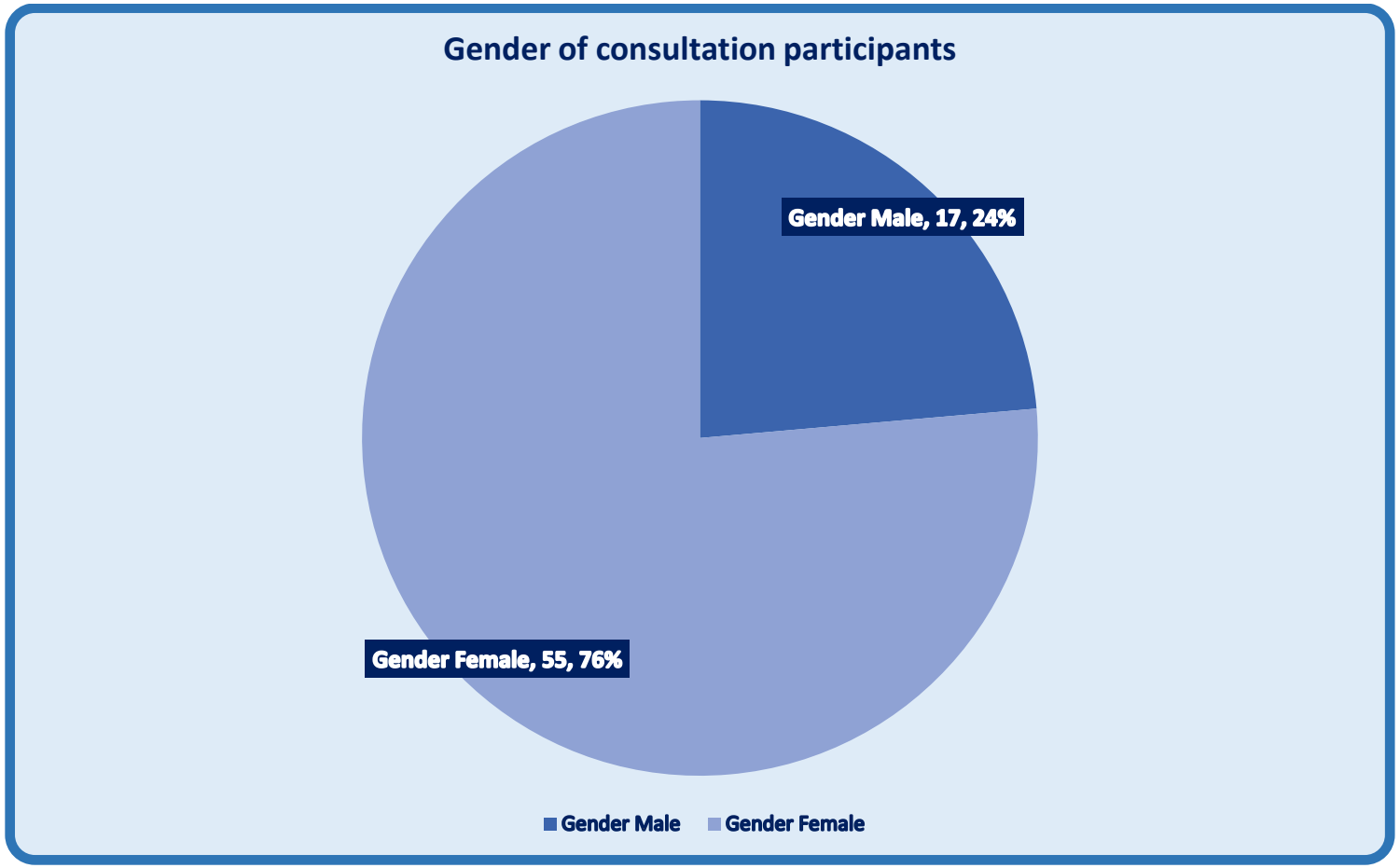
- Digital skills workshops to enable increased participation in cultural and creative activities at home
- Provision of IPad's for use at home
- Outreach services are popular and help with relationship building, audience development and trust. They also address the barriers respondents cited regarding travelling to activities so where possible and safe to do so they should be considered. This approach may also build confidence and encourage visits to cultural venues
- Setting up online groups and classes for dance, painting and drawing, book groups, making art using a computer, local history research, creative writing, crochet and sewing and theatre engagement were all activities that respondents were interested in seeing developed

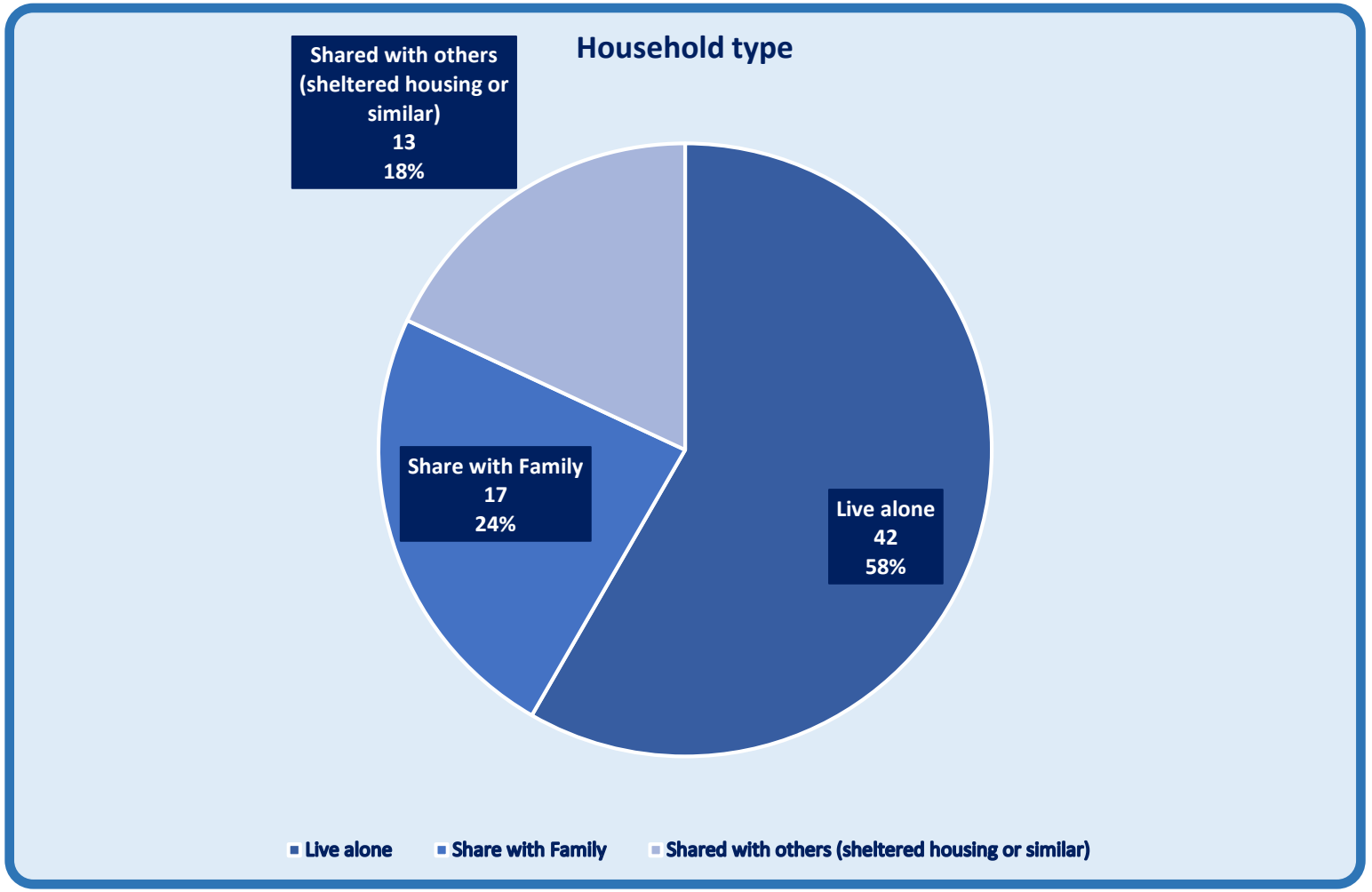
All of these could be flexible in delivery and be adapted to in person group work both in the community and on site, digital engagement and engagement by post and telephone

- A buddy scheme/peer support to give confidence when attending groups and advise and support with digital engagement and creativity in the home
- Clear promotion of activities in digital and printed format which can be shared easily (using existing networks were possible)

We need to create projects and creative activities that can be adapted to at home engagement if need be in order to keep older people safe and reduce isolation for those who may be at risk if they leave home and attend groups. The impact of the Covid 19 situation is yet to be fully realised but many of the themes that have emerged could be adapted to suit the new world that is emerging.

Appendix 1 – Tables of quantitative findings Q1-7 and post it note vote for a favorite activity





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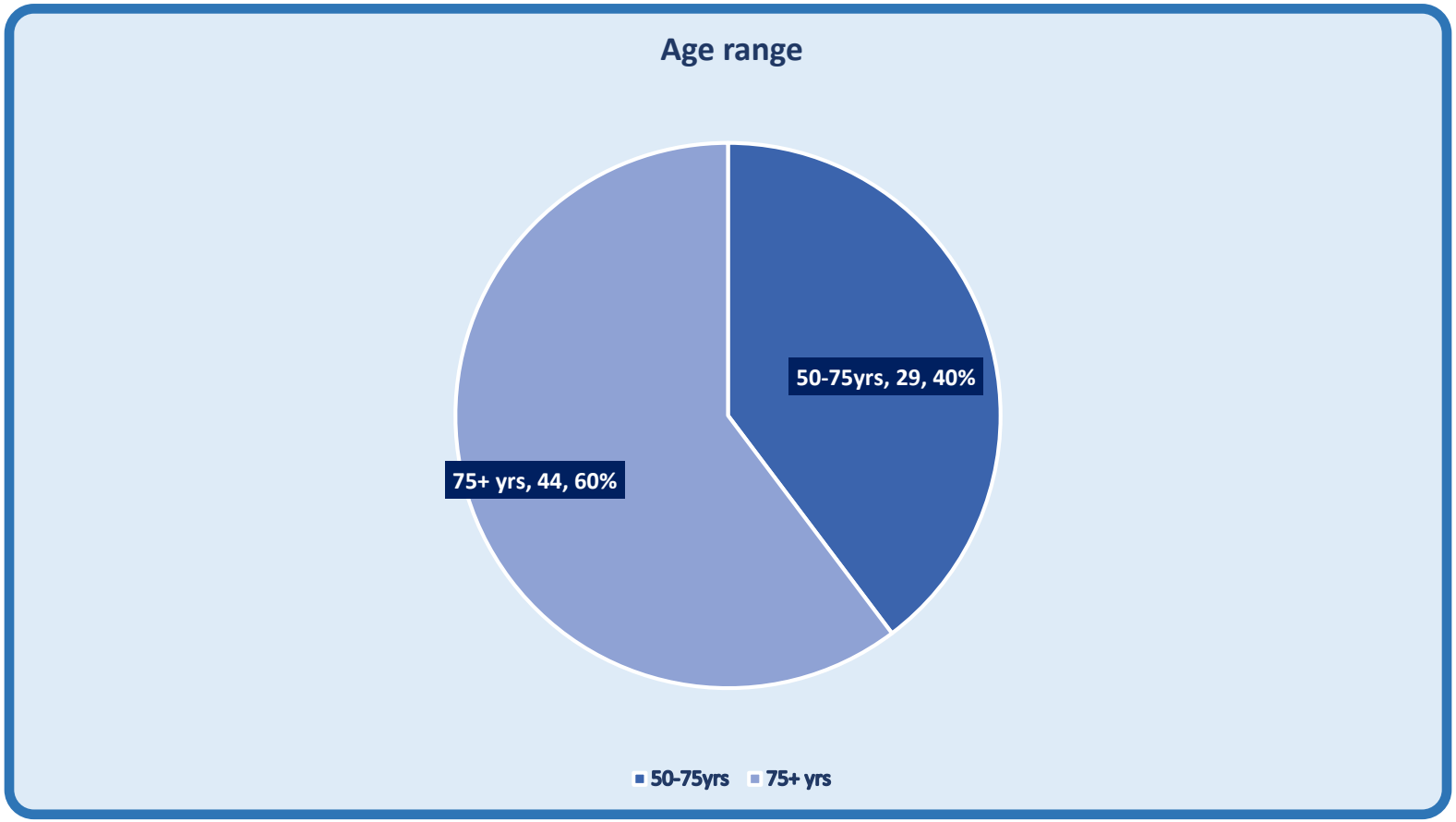
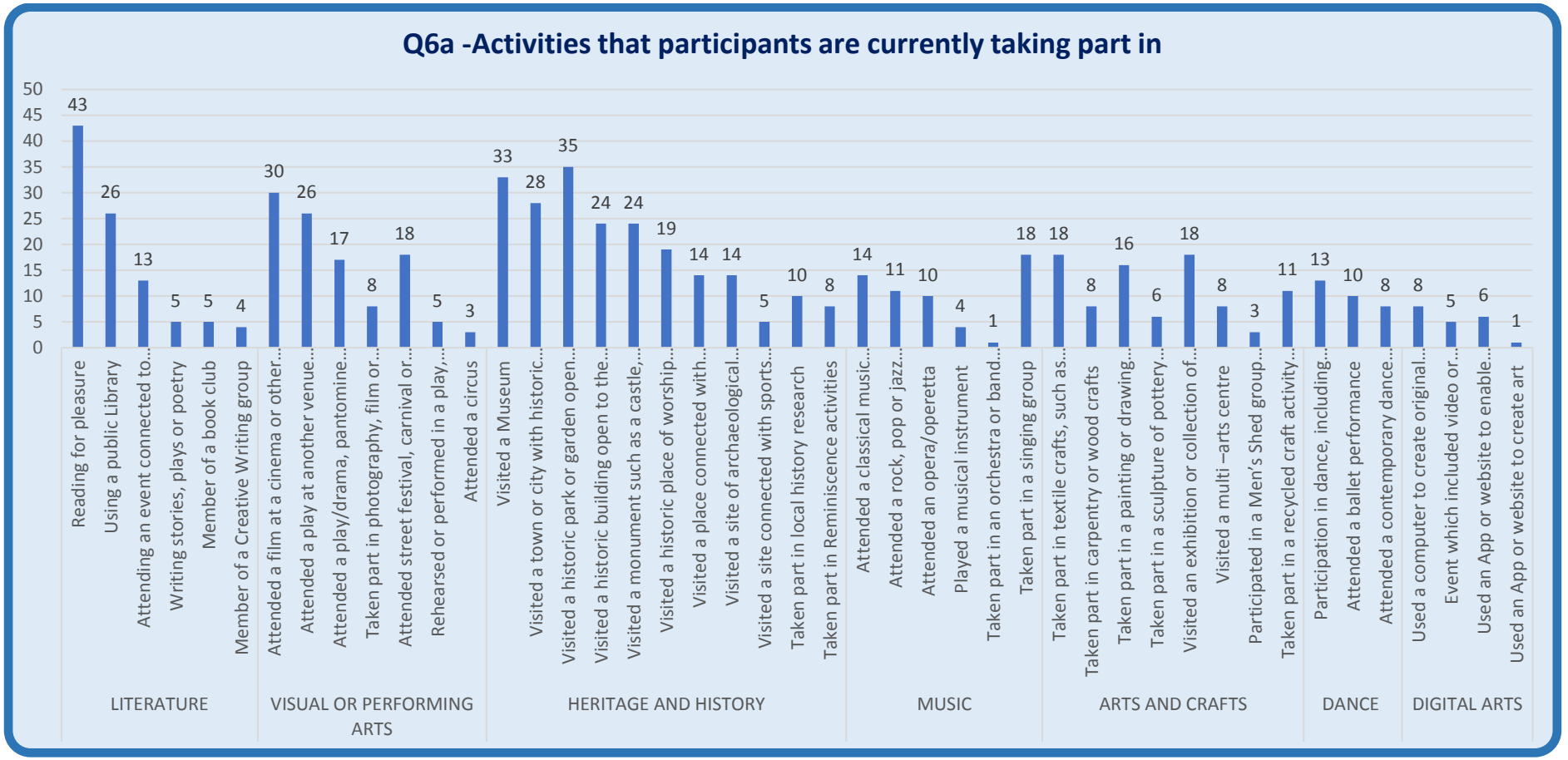

Age range
50-75yrs, 29, 40%
75+ yrs, 44, 60%
50-75yrs
75+ yrs



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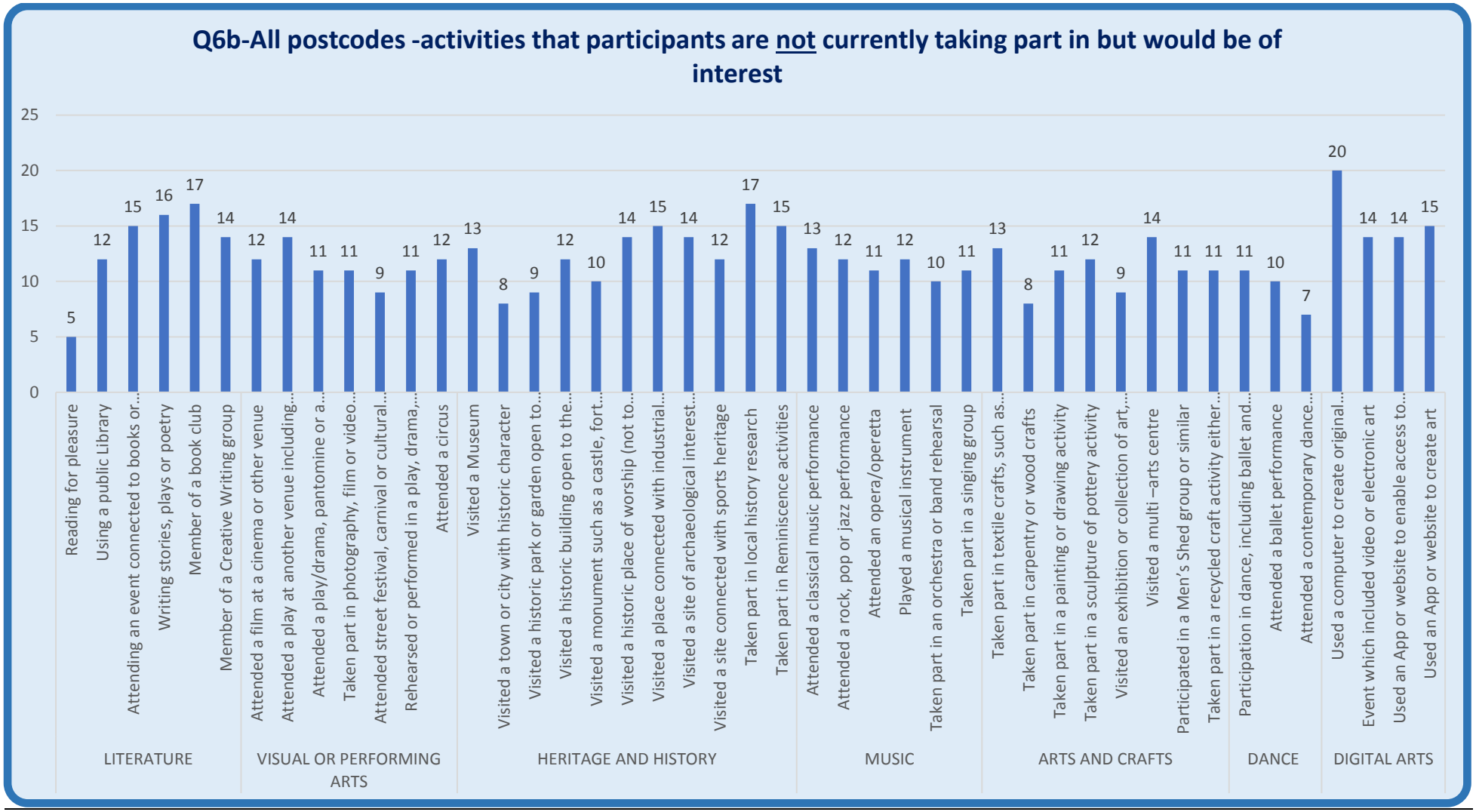
Q6b-All postcodes -activities that participants are not currently taking part in but would be of interest
25
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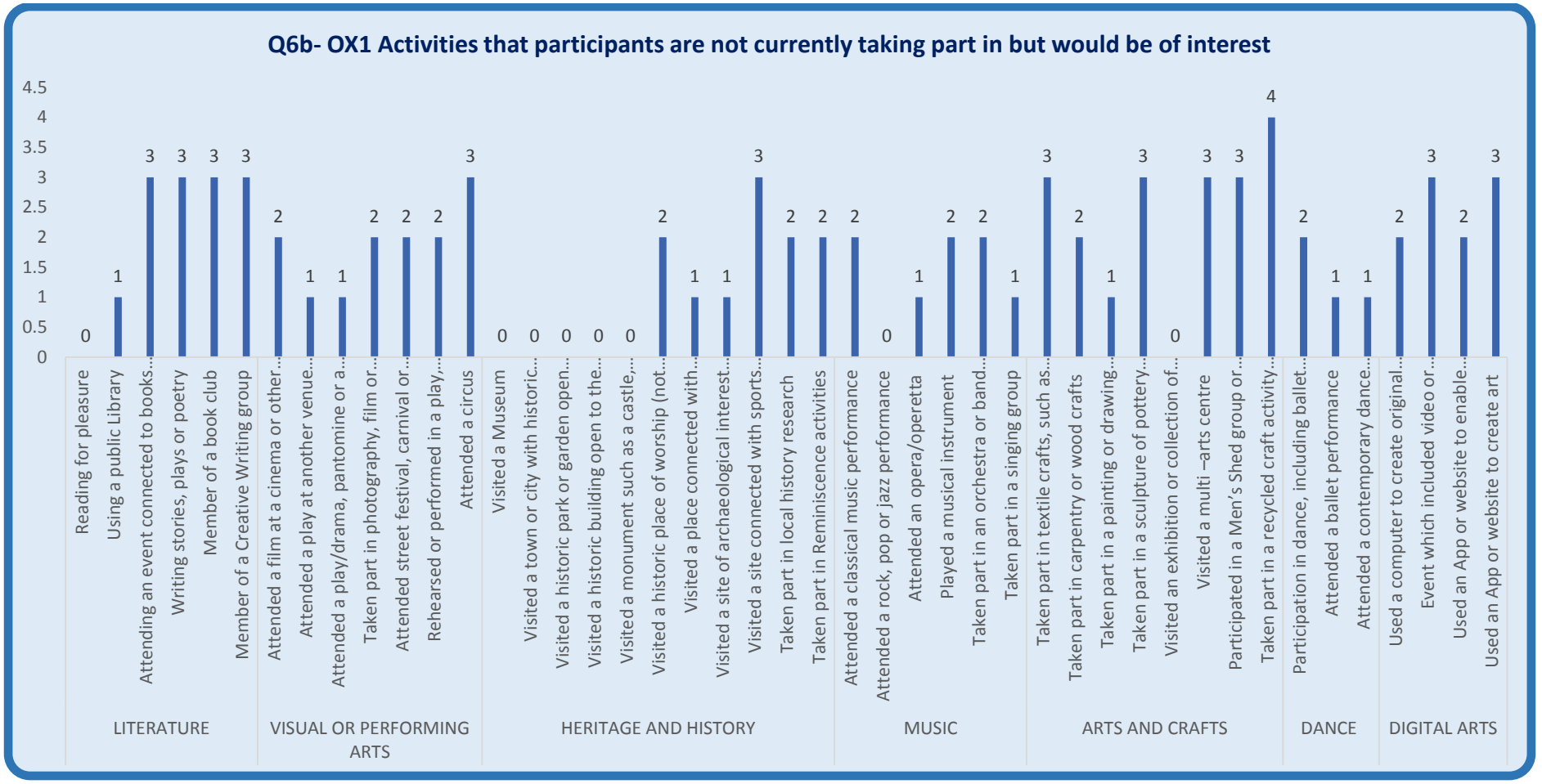
15
Reading for pleasure
Using a public Library
Attending an event connected to books or...
Writing stories, plays or poetry
Member of a book club
Member of a Creative Writing group
Attended a film at a cinema or other venue
Attended a play at another venue including...
Attended a play/drama, pantomine or a...
Taken part in photography, film or video...
Attended street festival, carnival or cultural...
Rehearsed or performed in a play, drama,...
Attended a circus
Visited a Museum
Visited a town or city with historic character
Visited a historic park or garden open to...
Visited a historic building open to the...
Visited a monument such as a castle, fort...
Visited a historic place of worship (not to...
Visited a place connected with industrial...
Visited a site of archaeological interest...
Visited a site connected with sports heritage
Taken part in local history research
Taken part in Reminiscence activities
Attended a classical music performance
Attended a rock, pop or jazz performance
Attended an opera/operetta
Played a musical instrument
Taken part in an orchestra or band rehearsal
Taken part in a singing group
Taken part in textile crafts, such as...
Taken part in carpentry or wood crafts
Taken part in a painting or drawing activity
Taken part in a sculpture of pottery activity
Visited an exhibition or collection of art,...
Visited a multi –arts centre
Participated in a Men's Shed group or similar
Taken part in a recycled craft activity either...
Participation in dance, including ballet and...
Attended a ballet performance
Attended a contemporary dance...
Used a computer to create original...
Event which included video or electronic art
Used an App or website to enable access to...
Used an App or website to create art
LITERATURE
VISUAL OR PERFORMING ARTS
HERITAGE AND HISTORY
MUSIC
ARTS AND CRAFTS
DANCE
DIGITAL ARTS



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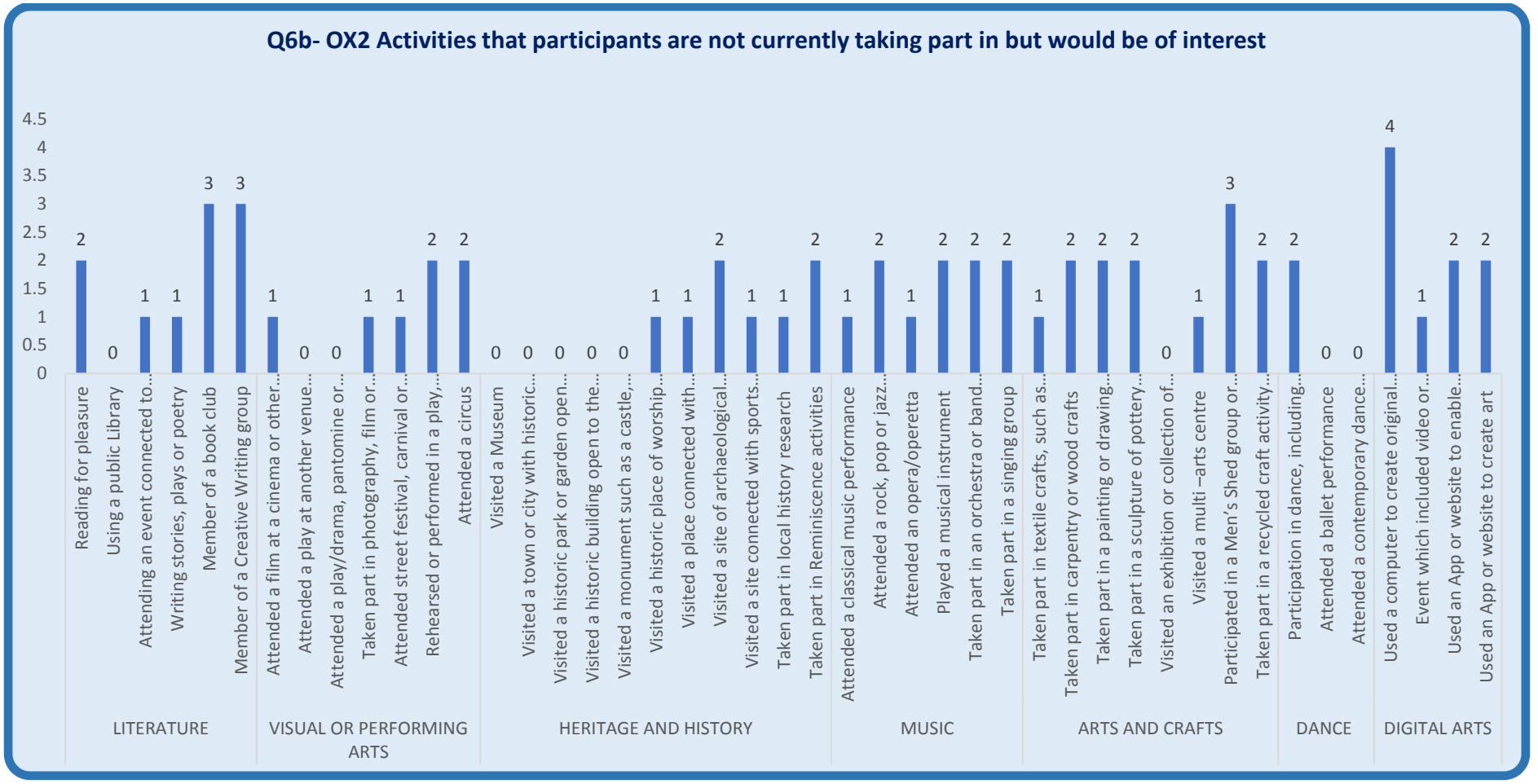

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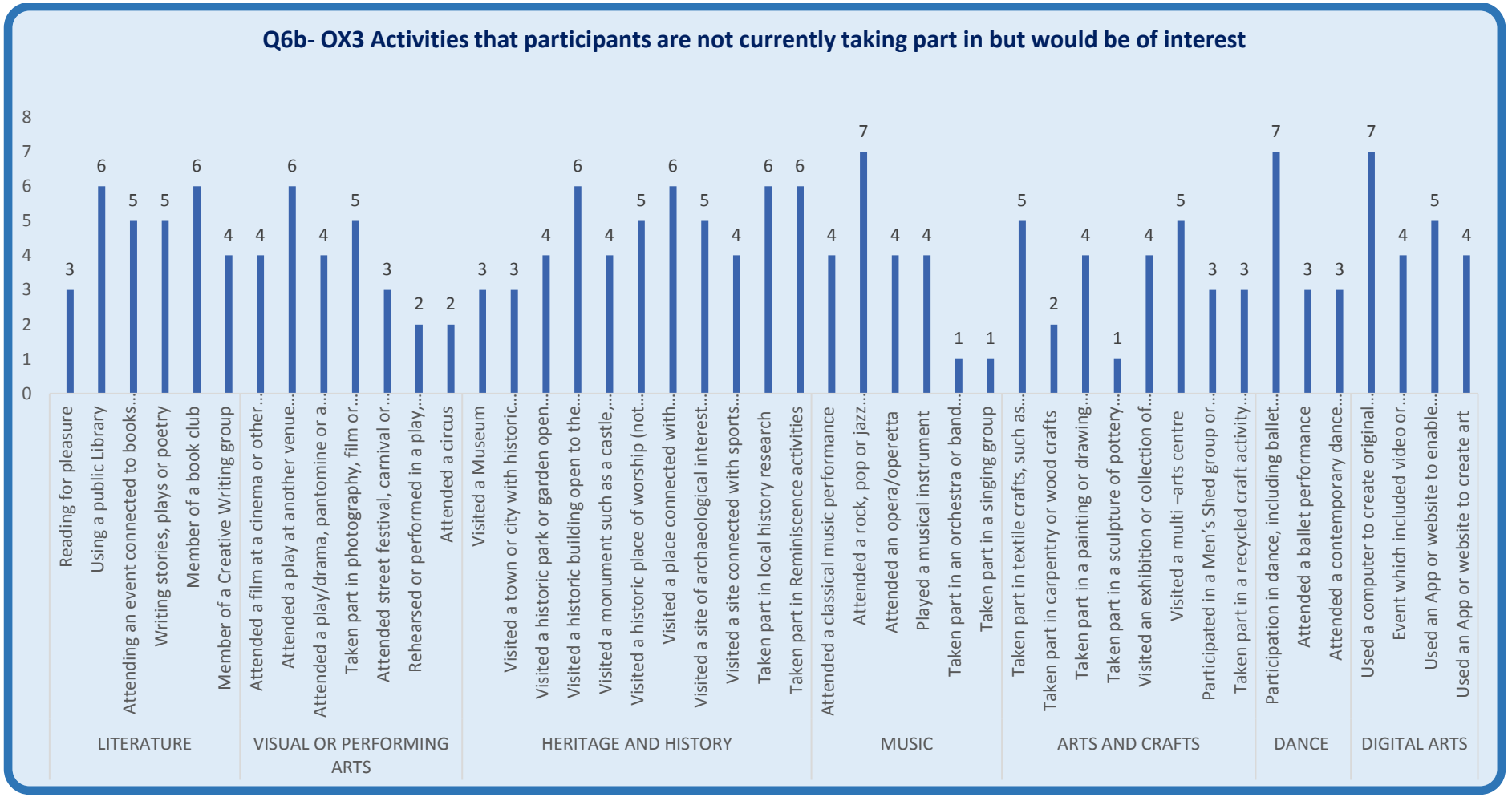

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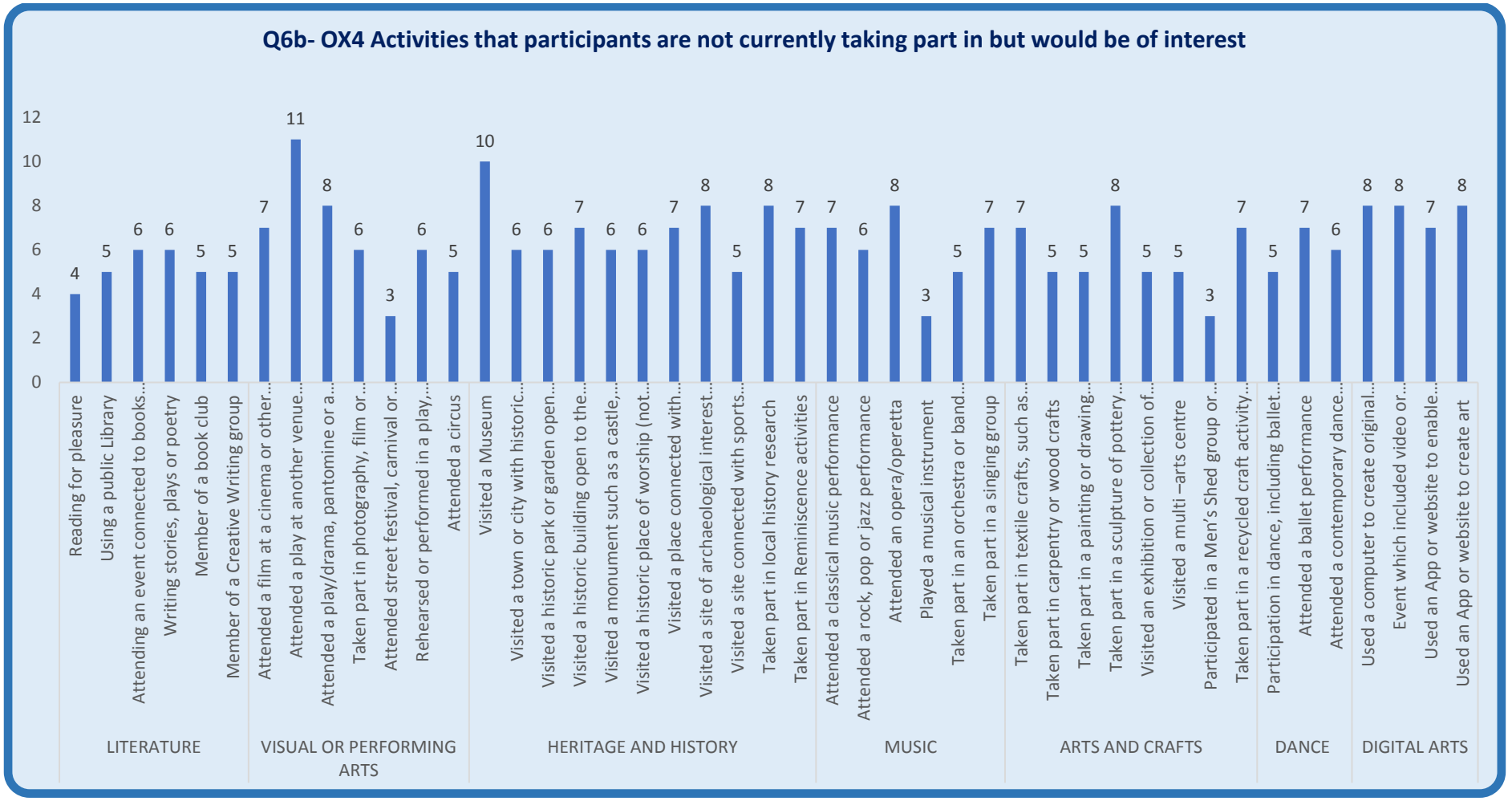

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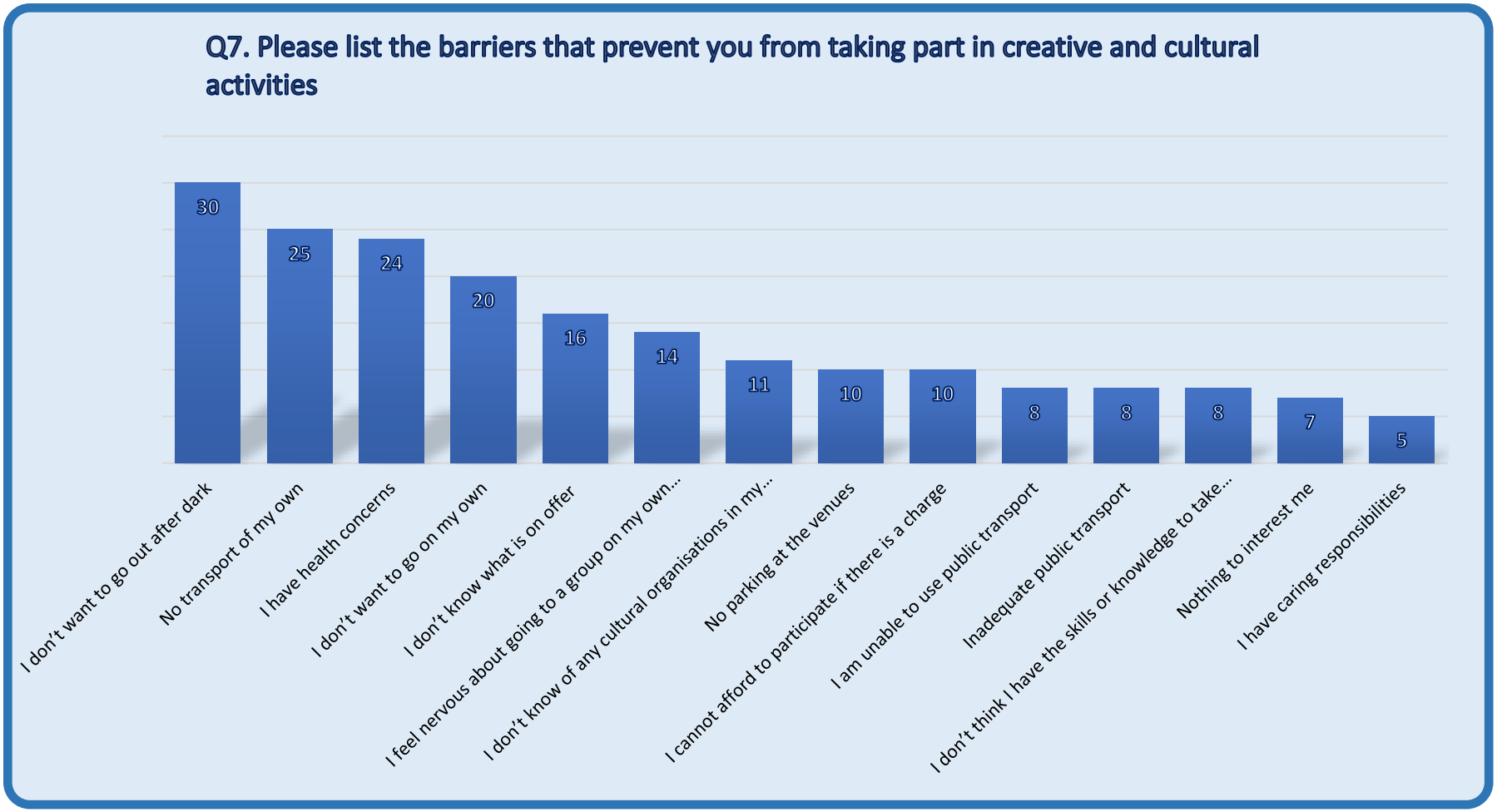
Q7. Please list the barriers that prevent you from taking part in creative and cultural activities
30
25
24
20
16
14
11
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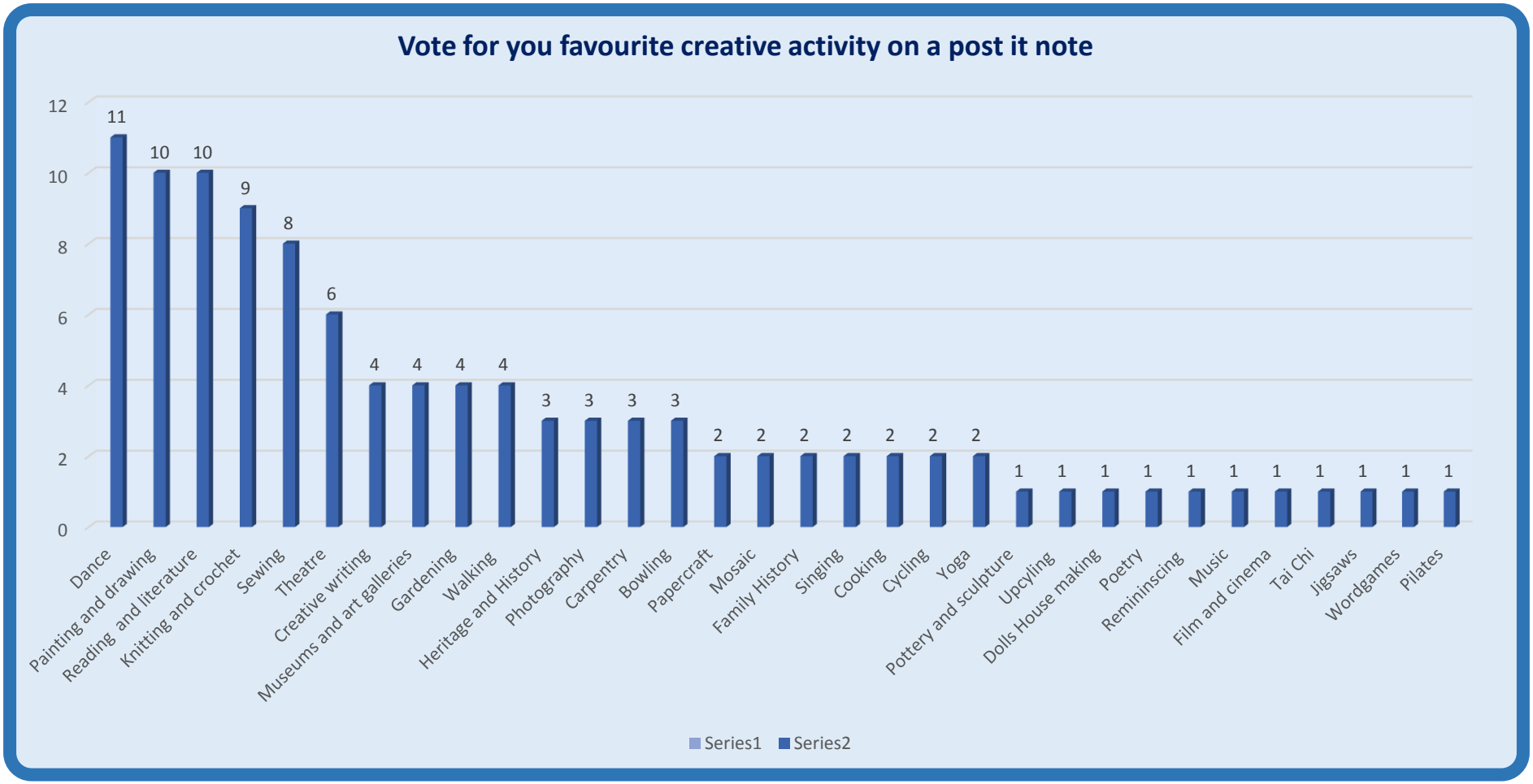
8
8
8
7
5
I don't want to go out after dark
No transport of my own
I have health concerns
I don't want to go on my own
I don't know what is on offer
I feel nervous about going to a group on my own...
I don't know of any cultural organisations in my...
No parking at the venues
I cannot afford to participate if there is a charge
I am unable to use public transport
Inadequate public transport
I don't think I have the skills or knowledge to take...
Nothing to interest me
I have caring responsibilities



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Appendix 2 - Qualitative feedback Q9 and 10

Q9-Please share your thoughts on what local cultural or arts organisations can do to support you to attend their activities and events

Barton Bingo

If an event was in the daytime that would make me interested.

Chip and Chat group

Advertise more widely.

Clockhouse-Phoenix Rising group

Provide Transport or come to us.

Transport would help, and free tickets.

Set up a meet up group so I know where to go and a way to join theatre group backstage (e.g. lighting).

Dementia Oxfordshire Memory Café

Daughter takes me to a variety of things, Museum etc.

Would like more activities in area so no travel.

Donnington 50+ group

Not interested in arts.

We need more workshops with arts.

I make use of the Clockhouse, a community centre for the over 50s.

Support making Beehives.

Hogley Bogstars

Having lived and worked abroad I know very little of what goes on and how to find out about it.

Put on events for over 50s. Also let us know what's on.

Not sure as there are no barriers for me to attend. Good advertising of events helps, so you know they exist.

I am open to anything really, transport not a problem because I have a good community centre within walking distance. Loved taking part in community projects. We did a blanket for Sobel house and two community mosaics.

Oxford 50+ Network

Just keep me informed as there are lots going on.

Dance Creative improves flexibility and lifts spirits.

Theatre, arts as and when affordable.

This is a very useful analysis of the reason to develop travel clubs.

Organise during the working day.

Many over 60 don't have computers or smart phones and cannot afford broadband and computers which need regular updating.

Potters Court

Not enough cultural arts in the area.

Silver Threads

It would be great if this community centre could be used for events.

Q10- Please use this page to share your any other thoughts that you have about the age friendly arts and cultural offer in Oxford including any experiences you have had, both positive and negative

Barton Bingo

I enjoy going to sites of interest with an activity linked to the site. I enjoyed communal art projects (making artwork in groups). Sometimes the text on Museum labels is too small and not positioned for easy reading. Either too high or too low.

Clockhouse Phoenix Rising group

Wheelchair access.

Dementia Oxfordshire Memory Café

Not much of interest.

Farmer ability, loves it and loves photography and gardening.

Previously a scout leader.

Theatre, cinema, museum.

Donnington 50+ group

I love to share my artistic skills.

As I said I go to the Clockhouse where I have made some good friends.

Difficulty connecting with resources. Hoping to do outreach project from Donnington over 50s group.

Hogley Bogstars

Know very little but would like to know more.

Loved attending the Ashmolean Museum and Oxford University Museum to look at and handle artefacts but group was large and we were not wanted and I felt very upset about it.

I've had excellent experiences with activities at the Bullingdon Community Centre and want to continue. The Oxford Civic Society offer really interesting talks and guided walks. The Oxford Architectural and History Society also offer excellent talks and walks. The Ashmolean, Pitt Rivers and Modern Art Oxford have a huge range of activities and most are free.

Museum groups have become too popular so people are excluded.

The Bullingdon has some lovely activities but it is difficult to bring new people and running activities fall on the same people all the time.

Potters Court

Mosaic making, silk painted and learn tapestry.

Could do with activities out of the centre of Oxford (i.e. Leys area).

Oxford 50+ Network

I wasn't aware there was an age friendly arts and cultural group in Oxford so I need to explore more.

Main crafts over last few years embroidery, writing, card making. Recommend brill book Threads of Life by Clare Hunter.

Knit and Natter once a month on a Saturday morning.

Apps, computers IT etc. things change so rapidly I've given up on grounds of costs and no adaptability. Older people, people with disabilities need paper information, easily readable, not just in pretty colours.

More exercise classes, some are too busy and fill up too quickly.

Some time ago attended art classes but tutor gave up because venues where too costly.

Cowley History group. Carol Newbigging The 25th anniversary of the Then and Now series. They were hanging from the rafters.

Potters Court

Mosaic making, silk painted and learn tapestry.

Could do with activities out of the centre of Oxford (i.e. Leys area).

Silver Threads

I have a positive experience of taking part in Full Circle at John Henry Newman School. Also with my singing group at Ark T Centre, we have sung at the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Weston Library. We have also taken part in the Festival of Light.

Took part in recorded sounds project at Modern Art Oxford.

Appendix 3 -Observations and Comments from the group discussions

Chip and Chat

The group shared concerns about going out after dark and were interested in activities being local to them and felt that they would be more likely to take part if they didn't have to travel so far. Some members of the group organise and take part in the popular Silver Shakers dance and movement class which takes place locally.

Dementia Oxfordshire Memory Café

The group had recently very much enjoyed a visit from the Engagement Officer at Oxford Playhouse which involved dressing up and was great fun, it was felt that outreach visits of this type built confidence for the group to visit Oxford Playhouse. The most popular activity was singing and music which was enjoyed by most people in the group.

Donnington 50+ group

One member of the group said they had received great support from the Clockhouse, they had felt nervous at first but now enjoyed singing and gardening and poetry there. Cuts to Adult Education and classes were mentioned and now the Adult Education magazine listed classes in the evening which was no good for some people as they didn't want to go out in the evening. It was also felt that there is a segregation of tenants and owner occupiers in the Donnington area caused by the way Oxford City Council organises it activities and this was not felt to be helpful. The groups had tried to set up a group in Rosehill but local people don't want to go that far and the lift in the Community Centre at Rosehill is not suitable for mobility scooters. It is hard to access the Donnington Community Centre during the day so this has created challenges in setting a film club. The group unanimously agreed that it would be great to have more activities in Donnington Community Centre. The group very much enjoyed the creative activity and discussed organising their own craft workshops using recycled materials.

Hogley Bogstars

Some of the discussion covered the size of groups and what to do when groups get too big and how this is managed. One participant and her husband had been told by email they were no longer eligible for a group at the Ashmolean Museum and felt very hurt by this.

This led to wider discussion about Oxford University Museums and access which included comments about the lack of clear signage leading to problems including getting lost in the building, the capacity of the lifts and toilets being too small.

The group felt that generally it was hard to access information and would like activities to be more local. There was some concern about how to promote this type of work though and would anyone come if a big organisation were to come out to a local centre. Local newsletters where suggested and some of the group said that they didn't like going to places on their own and would like someone to go with them.

Oxford 50+ Network

There was general agreement that promotion of activities needs to be more accessible and coordinated, in some cases information is not up to date. Also access to the internet was cited as a barrier especially for those who do not use computers. The group mentioned recycled craft and the Orinoco Scrapstore as a great resource and also the Library of Things for hiring equipment. Also the Lets scheme and RAW.

Potters Court

The group who meet regularly in the residents lounge had organised creative activities in the past and it had been enjoyed by those who took part but lack of resources where identified as a problem. There was enthusiasm for activities on site to happen again and the lounge could be made available and members of the local community could also attend (although this had been hard to organise in the past).