

Leisure Activities of Two Generations of Russians

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This article, based on the results of a sociological survey of parents of schoolchildren, presents detailed information on leisure activities of students of secondary schools and retrospective information about their parents' own childhood leisure. The article sets out the structure of the students' free time, the content of leisure activities, and particular leisure activities of students living in different types of settlements. The article pays special attention to differences in leisure activities based on economic status of the family and parents' education level.

Key words: *Structure of Students' Leisure Activities; Social and Cultural Reproduction; Student Leisure Activities; Family Cultural Capital*

Our civilization's development reinforces the value of free time in the life of the individual, as well as in the life of various communities, groups and societies. The way people spend their leisure time is an indicator of changes in the daily life of generations, and how children spend their free time is especially revealing. Generally, in the adult community (parents, teachers, administrators, politicians), there is a perceptible need to have a more or less adequate representation of how children actually spend their free time and how the parents make an effort to organize this.

Despite seeming obvious, we find it necessary to clarify some basic concepts. Russian research on this topic has traditionally categorized "leisure" and "free time" based on time budgets and lifestyle. To understand the boundaries and scope of leisure, "free time" is usually when a person is not working in the public economy (mandatory education) or meeting some physiological and common household needs. In other words, it is the time a person uses at his or her discretion. The key feature of leisure is that a person can spend it as he or she pleases, free from professional, family or civic responsibilities. One can assume that the *essence of leisure is the arbitrary regulation of the intensity and content of personal activity* – a high level of arbitrariness is evidence of leisure; a low level of arbitrariness (obligations, duties) is evidence of work (labor, professional activities).¹

¹ Kupriyanov, B. V. (ed.) (2014). *Organizacija dosugovykh meroprijatij. Učebnik dlja sredněgo profesionalnogo obrazovanija*. Moskva: Akadēmija, p. 4.

Leisure, as an important component of lifestyle, thus reflects the entire spectrum of a generation's priorities and stereotypes, and manifests itself in the content and intensity of free-time activities.

In 2013, the National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE) conducted a large-scale survey of various categories of adults involved in organizing students' free time. Here we use the results of a study on students' parents on issues related to continuing education (Monitoring the Economics of Education). The study was part of NRU HSE's fundamental research program in 2013. Yuri Levada's analytic center (Levada-Center) organized and conducted the survey, which took place in September-November 2013.

The *survey* polled 2,080 parents of students who are taking continuing education classes (at various organizations and with private tutors). The sample included respondents from 27 Russian regions, living in cities, towns and villages. The largest share live in cities (regional centers) with population of 100,000 to 1 mln people (29.7%); one fourth of the sample was made up of residents of Moscow and the surrounding area (24.7%); the third largest share was from cities of over 1 mln people (21.2%).

The researchers conducted the survey in various types of educational institutions: nearly half (49.9%) were preparatory schools and secondary schools with a particular subject of focus (educational institutions in the regions and regional centers); a significant portion (41.3%) were regular schools (locations also varied by administrative definition of urban settlements); and the rest (9.8%) were at rural schools, both large and small.

The survey polled parents of children aged 5 to 18 years (grades 1–11), the average student age was 12 and there were slightly more girls (57.3%) than boys (42.7%). Most parents' students were doing well in school (45.1% receiving predominantly (e.g. A's and B's).

The data show that 53.9% of mothers (stepmothers) and 43.9% of fathers (step fathers) have a higher education, while a little less than a fourth of parents have secondary vocational education (24.2% of mothers (stepmothers) and 23.7% of fathers (stepfathers)). Employment in the polled families had the following characteristics: 32% of mothers (stepmothers) had specialist-level jobs; 21% were office workers; and 14% were unemployed; 22% of fathers (stepfathers) had specialist-level jobs; 14% had office jobs; and nearly 10% were manual laborers.

Regarding income levels, the highest proportion of respondents put themselves in the category "rather well off, but would have to go into debt to purchase a car or take an expensive vacation" (42%). A significant share of the sample has limited financial resources: 33% said they would

have difficulty buying small household appliances. Only 9% answered that they can afford significant financial expenses. Having characterized the sample and the respondent "profile," we turn to our research objectives. Even a separate article could not begin to summarize this project's myriad goals, so here we focus on the structural and substantive characteristics of how Russian students spend their free time, and how leisure differs depending on type of community and family characteristics, but most importantly, we attempt to compare the childhood leisure activities of modern students with those of their parents when they were in school.

Structure of schoolchildren's leisure. The data show that students at general education schools have 32–35 hours of free time per week. This differs depending on the child's age, the community's socio-cultural features, the family's lifestyle, the general educational institution's schedule, and other factors.

According to the data, supplemental education plays a significant role in the *structure of children's leisure activities*. If one combines classes at school and after-school clubs, studios and tutoring, then the total sum takes up the largest share of free time at an average of 7.5 hours per week, or 22.6% of the total free-time budget. Of this, activities outside of school take up the most time at 4.4 hours, while school groups, studios, clubs and the like take up 2.2 hours. The least time (0.9 hours, or 2.7% of the total free-time budget) from the weekly budget is spent with a tutor (figure 1).

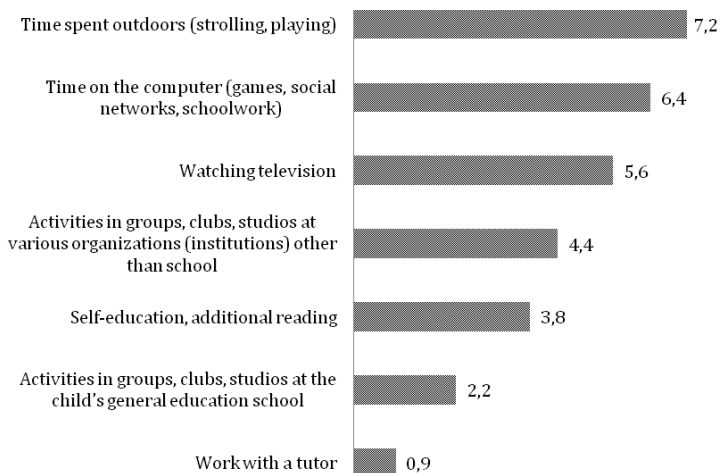


Figure 1. Structure of students' free time. Average time spent on various activities per week (including Sunday), hours.

Time spent outside was comparable with that spent on supplementary education at 7.2 hours per week (21.7% of the total free-time budget). Children also spend a relatively large amount of time on the computer (6.4 hours per week, including time spent on educational activities, or 19.3% of the free-time budget) and watching television (5.6 hours, or 16.9% of the budget). Self-education and non-school reading account for 3.8 hours per week (11.5%).

Differentiation of Students' Leisure Activities

For this research, it is important to realize the idea of the project is to study socio-economic and geographical inequality among students and schools.² We analyze differences in the structure of schoolchildren's free time based on the type of settlement in which they live. The first thing that stands out is the fact that the trend is non-linear. Schoolchildren have the most of free time in cities with population of up to 100,000 people (36.9 hours per week) and cities of over 1 mln people (35.2 hours). They have the least free time in Moscow (29.3 hours) (table 1). School groups (clubs, studios, etc.) play the most significant role in the structure of students' free time in cities with population of 100,000 to 1 mln people (10% of the total free-time budget), while non-school institutions are most prevalent in Moscow (17%), cities of 100,000 to 1 mln people (16%) and cities smaller than 100,000 people (16%). Generally, students in Moscow and cities with population of 100,000 to 1 mln people spend the most time on supplemental education (various types, a respective 31% and 32% of total free time) (table 1).

In order to present a more detailed picture of the structure of students' free time, we look at the specifics of different categories of families when divided into groups based on the concept of cultural capital.³ Noteworthy developments in this aspect have come from V. S. Sobkin⁴ and the previously mentioned collective from the HSE's Institute of Education.⁵

² Froumin, I. D. – Pinskaya, M. A. – Kosaretsky, S. G. (2012). Socialno-ekonomičeskoje i tĕritorialnoje nĕravenstvo uĉenikov ŝkol. In *Narodnoje obrazovanije*, nr. 1, pp. 17–24.

³ Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In Richardson, J. G. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and research for Sociology of Education*. New York – London; Ochkina, A. V. (2010). Kulturnyj kapital semji kak faktor socialnogo povedĕnija i socialnoj mobilnosti (na matĕrialach issledovanija v provincialnom rossijskom gorodĕ. In *Mir Rossii*, nr. 1, pp. 67–68.

⁴ Sobkin, V. S. – Kalashnikov, E. A. (2013). Uĉenik osnovnoj ŝkoly: otnoŝenije k dopolnitĕlnomu obrazovaniju. In *Voprosy psichologii*, nr. 4, pp. 16–26.

⁵ Froumin, I. D. – Pinskaya, M. A. – Kosaretsky, S. G. (2012), op. cit.

	Moscow	Cities with population of over 1 mln people	Cities with population of 100,000 to 1 mln people	Cities with population of up to 100,000 people	Towns and villages
Activities in groups, clubs, studios in general education schools	2.8	2.3	3.6	3	3.2
Activities in groups, clubs, studios at various organizations (institutions), besides school	4.9	4.3	5.3	5.9	3.6
Work with a tutor	1.3	0.8	1.2	0.9	0.6
<i>Total supplemental education</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>10.1</i>	<i>9.8</i>	<i>7.4</i>
Self-education, additional reading	3.7	4.4	4	5.2	3.3
Watching television	4.2	7.6	5.2	7.2	7
Time on the computer (games, social networks, schoolwork)	6.2	7	6.8	7.1	7.2
Time spent outdoors (walking, playing)	6.2	8.8	7	7.6	8.1
<i>Total free time</i>	<i>29.3</i>	<i>35.2</i>	<i>33.1</i>	<i>36.9</i>	<i>33</i>

Table 1. Structure of schoolchildren's free time (distribution by type of settlement, hours).

The criterion we use to separate families into groups based on cultural capital is a traditional option – education level of the mother/stepmother. The study shows that in families in which the mother/stepmother has a high level of education (two higher education degrees, postgraduate, PhD), the children spend less time outside (6 hours per week) and watching television (4.2 hours), and more time in groups outside of school (6.1 hours), with a tutor (2.2 hours), and on self-education (13.6% of total free time). Characteristically, in families where the education level of the mother/stepmother is lower, children spend more time in school groups (5.3 hours) and less time in non-school groups (3.3 hours). It is worth noting that the children with the most of free time (35.5 hours per week, versus the average of 34.1) are those from families in which the mothers have general secondary education or below. That said, there is also an area where the level of social capital does not play a deciding role in the structure of a student's free time, namely time spent on the computer (more than one fifth of total free-time budget) (table 2).

Mother's education	General secondary or below		Secondary vocational		Some higher education and higher education without a degree		Two higher education degrees, post graduate or PhD	
Children's activities in free time	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
Activities in groups, clubs, studios in general education schools	5.3	14.9	3.1	8.9	2.7	8.4	3.8	11.2
Activities in groups, clubs, studios at various organizations (institutions), besides school	3.3	9.2	4.5	13	4.9	15.2	6.1	17.9
Work with a tutor	0.9	2.5	0.7	2	1	3.1	2.2	6.5
Self-education, additional reading	3.4	9.6	4.1	11.9	4	12.4	4.6	13.6
Watching television	7	19.7	6.7	19.4	5.7	17.6	4.2	12.4
Time on the computer (games, social networks, schoolwork)	7.2	20.3	7.3	21.1	6.7	20.7	7	20.6
Time spent outdoors (walking, playing)	8.4	23.6	8.2	23.7	7.3	22.6	6	17.7
Total	35.5	100	34.6	100	32.3	100	33.9	100

Table 2. Structure of schoolchildren's free time. (distributed by mother's education level).

Intensity of Students' Leisure Activities

How schoolchildren spend their free time varies in the number of activities per day allocated to supplementary education (we break this down into moderate intensity – one activity per day; average intensity – two activities; and high intensity – three or more activities per day). For a large share of students, these activities do not take place every day.

Interpreting the data suggests there is a relatively uniform distribution of students' workload on weekdays (Monday to Friday), a significant reduction in their participation in organized leisure on Saturday (from 70% on average on weekdays to 43.5% on Saturday), and a large drop off on Sunday to 15.6% (table 3). Supplemental interviews showed that the distribution of activities throughout the week depends on many factors:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 activity	51.9	46.3	47.7	45.5	48.1	32.5	12.2
2 activities	16.8	19.6	18.9	18.3	17.5	8.5	2.5
3 or more activities	3.3	4.4	4.2	3.4	4.1	2.4	0.9
Any activities	72	70.2	70.8	67.3	69.7	43.5	15.6
No activities	28	29.8	29.2	32.7	30.3	56.5	84.4

Table 3. Intensity of student activities during free time (percent of respondents).

teachers' schedules, students' school class schedules, and how parents organize their time.

Content of Students' Leisure Activities

The content of students' leisure activities is rather interesting. The survey results show that nearly half of schoolchildren play sports (49.4%), and almost one fifth previously did. A little fewer than half (45.3%) of students at general education schools are involved in the arts (18.2% were previously but are not currently). More than a quarter of them study a foreign language (26% currently, 12.8% previously). Less common are supplemental classes in school subjects (in-depth study) and crafts (figure 2).

Differentiation of Student Activities Based on Family Income

We attempt to find a relationship between how students spend their time and the level of income of parents who participated in the survey. The criterion was income per family member per month, and we split this into four groups: up to R10,000 (617 people), R10,001–30,000 (839 people), R30,001–50,000 (115 people), R50,001 and above (65 people). We discard the latter group due to the low number of respondents in this category.

According to the survey, a higher share of schoolchildren from more affluent families (income of R30,001–50,000 per person) study (or previously studied) foreign languages, sports, art and programming (computer science), than students of parents with lower incomes (fig. 3).

Among students from families with income of R10,000 or less per person, the percentage who take additional classes in school subjects (part of school curriculum) is higher, as it is for military sports, hiking and technology (design, modeling).

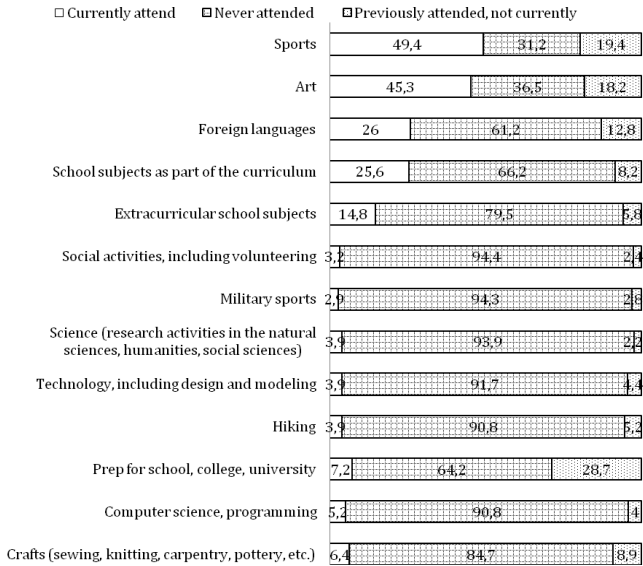


Figure 2. Content of general education school students' free time (percent of respondents by row).

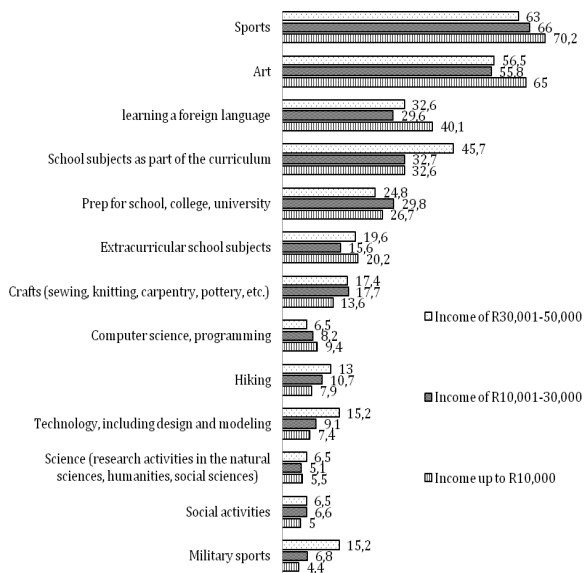


Figure 3. Content of students' free time (distributed by parents' income level, percent of respondents, respondents could choose several answers).

Meanwhile, social activities, science (research in the field of natural sciences, humanities, social sciences), preparatory classes for primary school, secondary school or university, classes in school subjects (outside of the curriculum) are equally in demand across income groups, albeit to varying degrees.

Based on total average demand among schoolchildren, craft activities (sewing, knitting, carpentry, pottery, etc.) is least relevant among more affluent groups of the population (figure 3).

Students' Leisure Activities: Fathers and Sons

In our study, parents of children answered questions not only about the content of their children's leisure activities, but were also asked to reflect on how they spent their free time when they were schoolchildren. The two groups of data made it possible to compare "fathers and sons", to use novelist Ivan Turgenev's phrasing, and express this comparison in the coefficient of reproduction of leisure activities (RLA) – the relationship between the frequency at which modern school children engage in certain activities with that at which their parents did in their own childhoods. The data can be interpreted as follows:

- If the value of the coefficient (RLA) is close to 1, the closer it is to being a "simple reproduction," indicating the absence of obvious changes in the new generation.
- The lower the coefficient (RLA), the weaker the reproduction of the activity among the "sons."
- The higher the coefficient (RLA), the more popular the leisure activity is among the young generation than among the "fathers."

The results of this study show that hiking and military and patriotic activities are as popular among current school children as they were for their parents (C rla=1.01; 1.06), and school subjects, both within the curriculum and outside of it (K rla=0.83; 0.88) while current students take part more frequently in art and sports (C rla =1.25; 1.26) (figure 4). The importance of foreign language classes has clearly increased (C rla=3.08), as has that of research activities (K rla=2.35), while the share of children involved in crafts (K rla=0.54) and social activities (C rla=0.76) has noticeably decreased. These figures do not contradict our everyday observations, but they paint the picture with more accuracy and can be used for analytical and design work.

We choose to make the bold assumption that schoolchildren's leisure activities determine their future social success, education level and income. To examine this, we refer to the list of leisure activities of parents of schoolchildren (what they did in their youth).

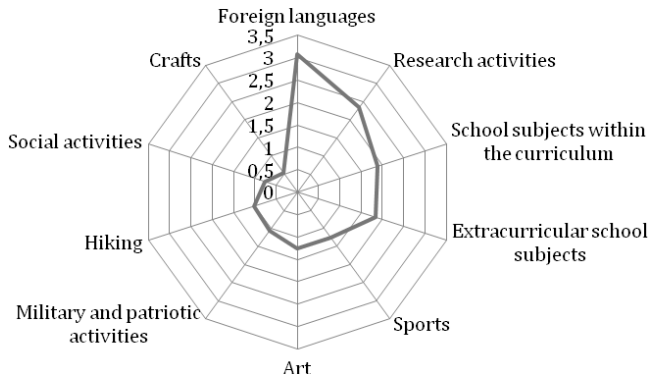


Figure 4. Coefficient of reproduction of leisure activities (relationship between schoolchildren's parents' leisure activities and those of their children – students).

We look at the distribution of mothers' education levels. Quite logically, the most significant differences among groups of parents is seen in extracurricular study of school subjects and research activities (figure 5), but differences in study of a foreign language, art and social activities cannot be called predictive (figure 5).

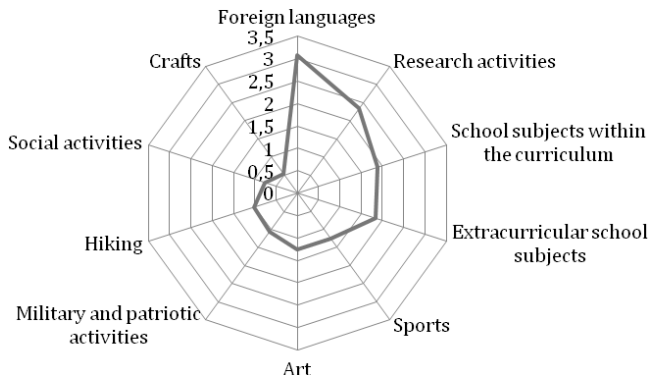


Figure 5. Types of leisure activities in which parents of schoolchildren participated in their childhood (distributed based on education level of mothers/stepmothers, percent of respondents, respondents could select several options).

It is also interesting to analyze parents' retrospective look at their own childhood leisure activities based on income level. One of the most striking differences here is in studying foreign languages and design

(modeling), and we also highlight hiking, extracurricular study of school subjects and science (figure 6). Of course, these figures need to be verified and clarified with further research.

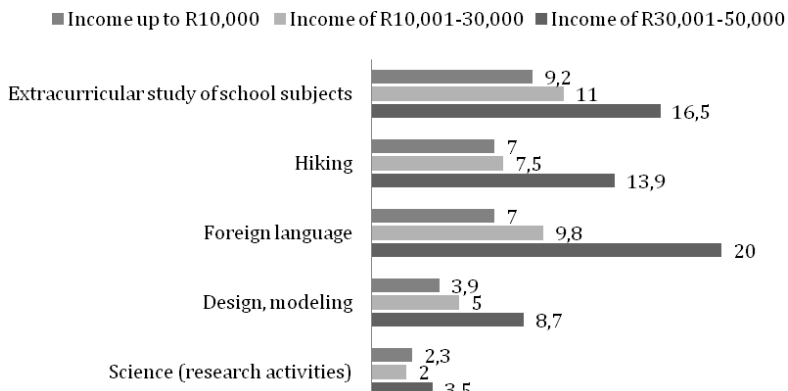


Figure 6. Types of leisure activities in which parents of schoolchildren participated in their childhood (distributed by income level, percent of respondents, respondents could select several options).

Sports, Art, Social Activities as Student Leisure

As the research shows, two thirds of students play sports during their free time, mostly team sports (35.8%) and combat sports (31.2%). Also common among schoolchildren are water sports (28.2%), track and field (23.7%) and various types of dance (22.1%), while weightlifting is less common (figure 7).

Sports are significantly more present in the leisure activities of boys, and in some sports there are very few girls – the ratio of girls to boys in combat sports is 1:5, and in technical sports it is even lower (1:10). In track and field, dance and figure skating, there are 1.5 to 2 times more girls (figure 7).

Next to sports, art classes are the most popular form of recreational activity among students. Our research showed that dance accounts for a significant share of schoolchildren's artistic endeavors (the various types of dance combined accounting for over one third). The share of girls is much higher than boys in all types of dance, including classical dance and ballet (girls outnumber boys 5:1), pop and modern dance (jazz, modern ballet, hip hop, etc.; 3:1), folk dance (including eastern dance and belly dancing) and ballroom (waltz, tango, foxtrot, samba,

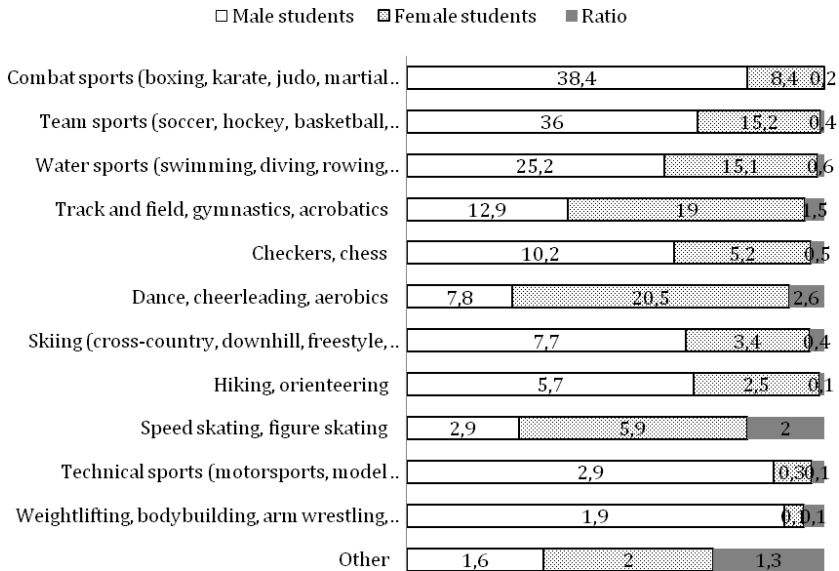


Figure 7. **Types students' sport activities** (distributed by gender, percent of respondents, respondents could select several options).

cha-cha-cha, rumba, paso doble, jive, etc.; 5:2). Only in the classes that teach currently popular forms of dance, such as club and street dance, did we find a closer ratio (5:3).

Fine art classes (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, graffiti, comics) account for more than one fifth of the total content of students' artistic activities, and slightly over one sixth of schoolchildren play a musical instrument (figure 8). In general, boys are significantly less involved than girls in artistic endeavors, though there are several areas where there are more boys – design, media arts (computer graphics) and literature (figure 8).

From the perspective of civic participation, it is revealing that more than half of schoolchildren do not take part in social activities (59.4%). Another 19.1% of parents are unaware if their children are a part of social organizations. Only 5.8% of parents said that their children are members of public youth groups (figure 9).

Sociological research on the leisure activities of modern Russian schoolchildren shows that students involved in supplemental education spend a large portion of their free time on this. Russian students spend a significant amount of their free time watching television and on the

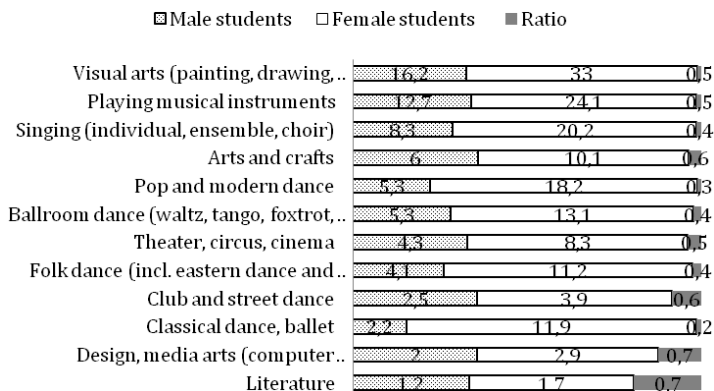


Figure 8. **Types of recreational art classes** (distributed by gender, percent of respondents, respondents could select several answers).

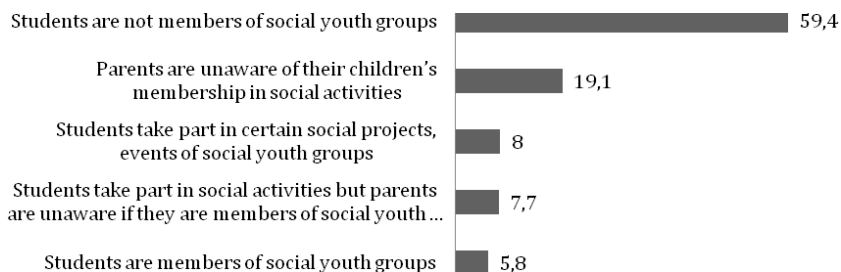


Figure 9. **Students' participation in social activities** (percent of respondents).

computer. For those whose parents have a higher level of education, supplemental study on top of regular schoolwork is a predominant feature of how they spend their free time, and these students tend to have less free time and spend less of it outside.

How students spend their free time also differs depending on the number of activities during the day devoted to supplemental education – this can be described as moderate, average and high intensity; most students fit into the average intensity group (classes not every day).

An analysis of the structure of Russian students' leisure activities shows that sports and art are popular choices, followed by foreign languages, education preparatory classes, and supplemental classes in school subjects that are part of the curriculum. The content of leisure activities differs depending on the family's financial standing; in

particular, students from more affluent families are somewhat more involved in sports, art, foreign languages and computer science.

Two thirds of students at general education schools play sports. The most popular are team sports, combat sports, water sports, track and field sports. The least popular are hiking and technical sports. For schoolchildren who prefer to spend their free time doing art, it is common to see several types of aesthetic activity, the most popular being dance, followed by crafts. In sports and art there are pronounced differences in preferences between boys and girls that follow traditional gender lines.

More than one fifth of schoolchildren take part in some form of social activity in their free time, while around 6% of students at general education schools are members of social organizations.

This is not a definitive picture of the characteristics student's leisure activities, but the data help clarify the existing ideas and create a more complete image of how Russian schoolchildren spend their time.

Comparing the lifestyles of modern students and their parents based on how they spend or spent their free time point to an "expansion of learning", meaning a strengthening of academic pursuits, as measured by the State Final Exam and Uniform State Exam, in the activities of modern schoolchildren compared with their parents, at the expense of a clear weakening of social activities and working with one's hands. We note that the problem of getting students involved in public life has been recognized in government documents, which state that there is "a weakly developed culture of responsible civic behavior; a meaningful share of young people lack the desire to engage in social activities and self-governance skills".⁶

⁶ Razvitije obrazovanija na 2013–2020 gody (2013). Available at [www:http://base.garant.ru/70379634/#ixzz353yQrE5E](http://base.garant.ru/70379634/#ixzz353yQrE5E)