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## 4. Leisure Interests

The study of leisure interests has been a central element of each Student Interest Survey, dating back to 1971. Information about how students spend their leisure time is important for program planning. In addition, it provides a clearer profile of the nature of students and their interests. Students' level of interest in the different areas of leisure has changed over the past 30 years. Some leisure areas and specific leisure items have changed as a result of sociocultural change and technological innovation.

To enable valid comparisons with previous of students, most survey items regarding leisure interest have remained the same. Eleven interest areas encompassed 68 specific leisure interests. Seven areas perceived by the author to be of greatest interest are included in this report.

Students were asked to indicate how often they participated in each activity. "Never," "occasionally," and "frequently" were used as the standards of frequency. Since each leisure activity has its own norms of frequency, the following definitions for guiding survey participants were included in the questionnaire.

**Never:** "Literally never, zero. I am not into this activity at all."

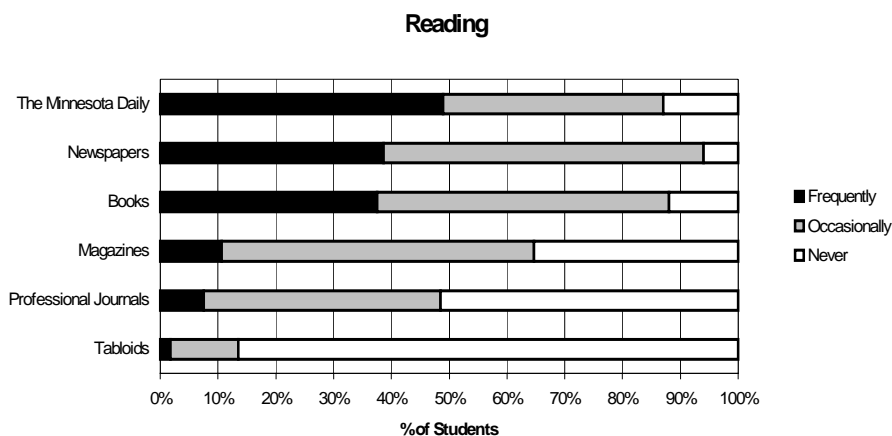
**Occasionally:** "I am a 'once in a while' participant in this particular activity; my participation is not steady—it is irregular." Or "I am somewhat into this; I have done this before."

**Frequently:** "I regularly participate in or spend time on this particular activity—whether it's a year 'round activity or a seasonal activity (sailing, downhill skiing, etc.); I do this thing often; I'm really into this."

## 4.1 Reading

Figure 4-1 represents six specific reading activities in descending order of frequency or participation. From the 2001 survey, the most frequently read publication is *The Minnesota Daily*, with 49.0 percent of undergraduates reading this campus publication frequently and another 38.1 percent reading it occasionally. Only 12.9 percent never read *The Daily*.

Figure 4-1



Three of every eight (38.6 percent) students read *newspapers* frequently and more than half (55.4 percent) read newspapers occasionally. The percentage of undergraduates reading newspapers frequently has dropped significantly in the past five years (1996 = 48.5 percent). The third most popular form of reading among those studied was *books* (not including textbooks). Following books were *weekly news magazines*. This form of readership declined rather precipitously among undergraduates from 1981 to 1996 and appears to have leveled off over the past five years (see Table 4-1).

Table 4-1  
Percentage of undergraduates  
reading weekly news  
magazines frequently:  
1981-2001

Survey year	%
1981	31.9%
1986	23.4
1991	18.0
1996	10.2
2001	10.6

Considerably less interest is shown in reading professional journals in one's major field of study. Only 1 in 13 undergraduates engage in this form of reading frequently. Not surprisingly, readership of

professional journals among undergraduates is low until the senior year. Readership is lowest for tabloids: 86.4 percent of students never read these publications, and only 1.8 percent read them frequently.

## 4.2 Television Watching

Frequencies for various forms of television watching, from the 2001 survey, are reported in Figure 4-2. The most common form of television watching, for the first time, is rental movies. One-third (36.3 percent) of all undergraduates watch rental movies frequently, and 94.9 percent watch at least occasionally. Comparative data on watching rental movies over the past 15 years is reported in Table 4-2.

Figure 4-2

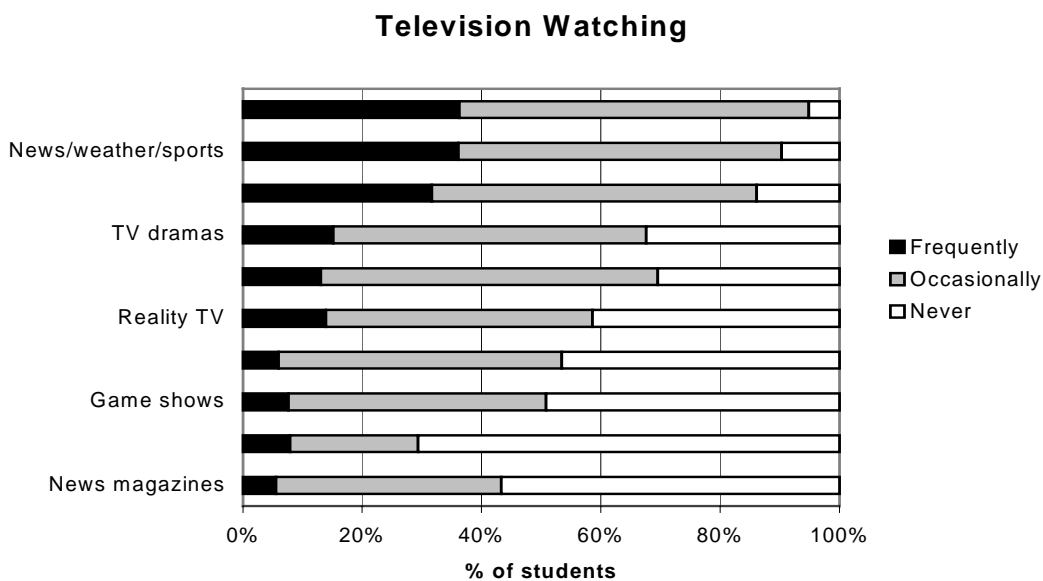


Table 4-2  
Percent of undergraduates  
watching rental  
movies on TV:  
1986-2001

Survey year	Never	Occasionally	Frequently
1986	33.0%	47.8%	19.2%
1991	7.7	53.3	39.0
1996	3.5	59.6	36.9
2001	5.1	58.6	36.3

In 1986, rental movies were a new phenomenon. By 1991, usage had increased significantly, and it has remained very stable since that time.

Watching the daily news/weather/sports programs is nearly as high as watching rental movies. The percentage of undergraduates who watch this programming frequently, however, has dropped sharply since 1991.

After hovering around 56 percent in 1981 and 1986, the percentage of those watching news/weather/sports “frequently” in 1991 jumped to 66.9 percent. The Student Interest Survey in 1991 was conducted during the height of the Gulf War. This event marked the coming of age of CNN News, bringing daily coverage of the war in Iraq into the living rooms of America. The public, including students, seemed transfixed by events in the Middle East. The percent of undergraduates watching news/weather/sports dropped to 46.1 percent in 1996 and 36.1 percent in 2001, the lowest levels measured by the interest survey. The figures for watching daily news/weather/sports frequently, from 1981 to 2001, are reported in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3  
Percentage of undergraduates watching daily news/weather/sports programs frequently: 1981-2001

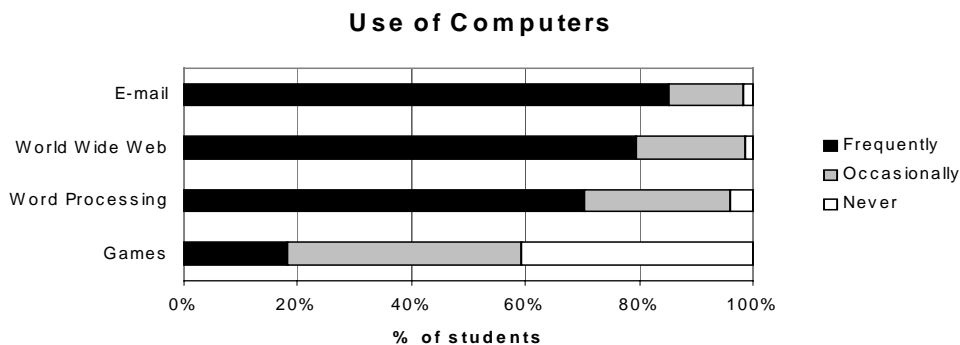
Survey year	%
1981	56.8%
1986	55.8
1991	66.9
1996	47.1
2001	36.1

A new television phenomenon, reality TV, was experienced frequently by only 13.9 percent of undergraduates, but by 58.6 percent at least occasionally. Among the survey items related to television, talk shows, game shows, daytime soap operas, and news magazine shows were least watched.

### 4.3 Use of Computers

As a relatively new phenomenon, computer use was not yet included at the time of the 1991 Student Interest Survey. Five specific computer uses were included in the 1996 and 2001 surveys, and the frequency of participation by undergraduates, from the 2001 survey, is reported in Figure 4-3.

Figure 4-3



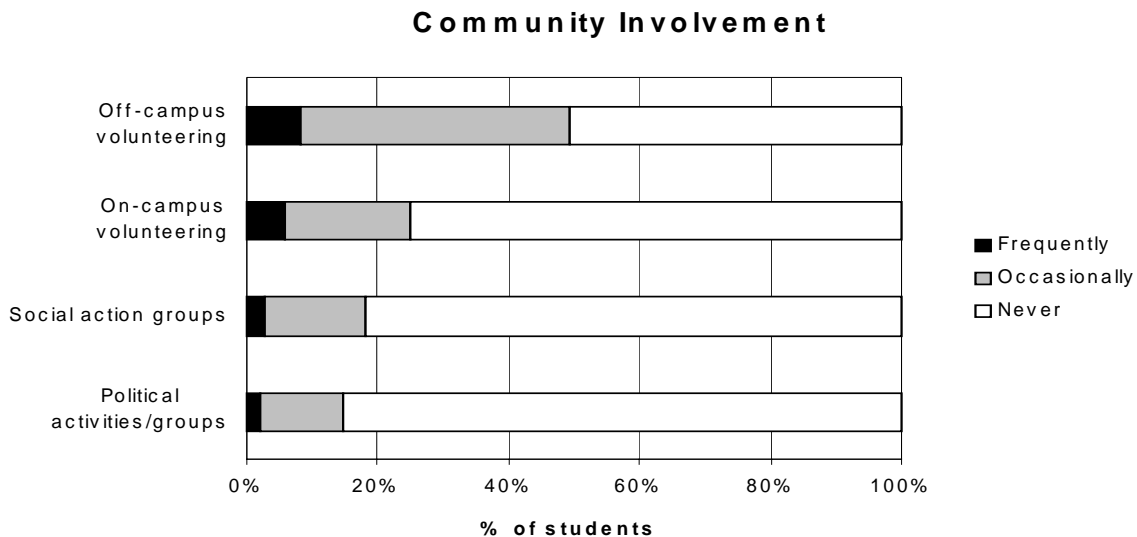
In 1996 *word processing* was the most common use of the computer. By 2001, however, such use was eclipsed by both *e-mail* (85.5 percent use frequently) and the *World Wide Web* (79.5 percent use frequently). Seven out of ten use the computer for word processing frequently (70.3 percent), and a quarter (25.8 percent) use it occasionally. Use of computers for games has actually declined slightly since 1996, and pales in comparison to the other three uses.

#### 4.4 Community Involvement

Community involvement is seen by the University as not only valuable in its own right as a civic investment, but also as providing personal development opportunities useful to one's future career. The various types of community involvement included in the 2001 survey are shown in Figure 4-4.

Half (49.3 percent) of all undergraduates participate at least occasionally in volunteer work *off campus*. Only one-fourth (24.8 percent) participate in some form of volunteer work *on campus*. There are fewer opportunities for on-campus volunteer work. The percentage who participate at least occasionally in *either on-campus work or off-campus work* is 53.0 percent, off slightly from a high of 55.7 percent in 1996.

Figure 4-4



Even though the 1996 Student Interest Survey was conducted during a year of national elections, the percentage of undergraduates participating at least occasionally in political activities, and groups was only 12.8 percent. A slight increase to 14.7 percent was experienced in 2001. In a democracy calling for citizen participation, these meager levels of involvement do not necessarily meet the University's ideal expectations of its students' commitment to community involvement.

## 4.5 Music

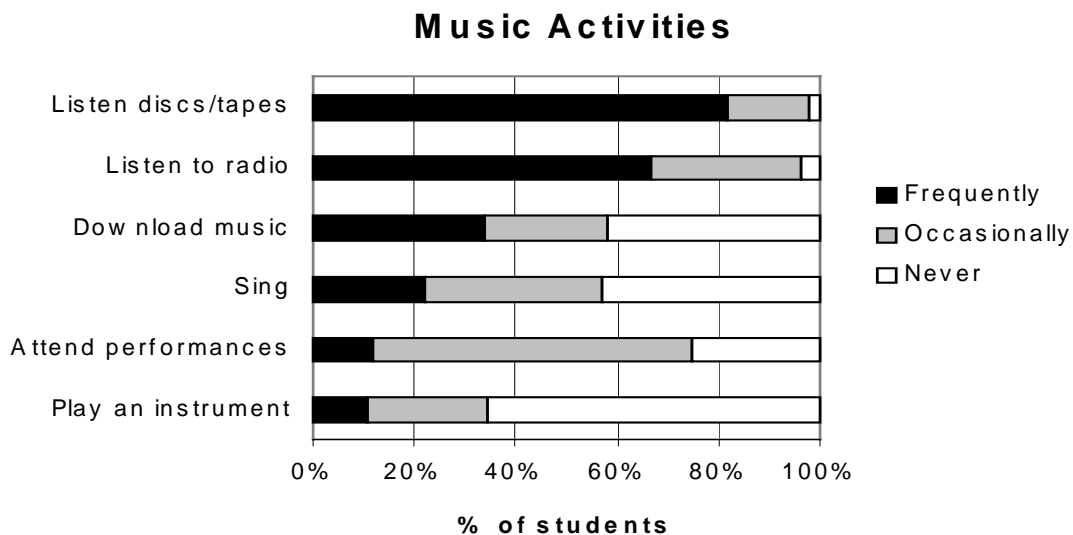
Music has always been an area of high interest among University students. Figure 4-5 portrays two distinct forms from the 2001 survey: (1) listening to music and (2) personally participating in music (i.e., singing or playing a musical instrument).

Over the past 10-15 years, electronic innovations have resulted in increases in listening to music: the first was the walkman, which enabled students to listen to high quality music anywhere, anytime, the second was the compact disc, which has greater storage capacity and higher sound quality than a cassette tape. Now comes the phenomenon of downloading music through the internet.

Four out of every five undergraduates (81.6 percent) listen frequently to recorded music, while 97.9 percent listen to it at least occasionally. Second in popularity is listening to music on the radio; 66.6 percent of students listen frequently, down from 74.0 percent in 1996. The third most common music experience is downloading music through the internet (34.1 percent do so frequently while 58.9 percent do so at least occasionally). Only 11.7 percent attend musical performances frequently, but 74.7 percent do so at least occasionally. Personally engaging in music occurs less frequently. Only one in five students (22.2 percent) sing frequently, while an additional 35.0 percent do so occasionally. Only 10.8 percent of undergraduates play a musical instrument frequently, and 23.8 percent do so occasionally.

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Figure 4-5

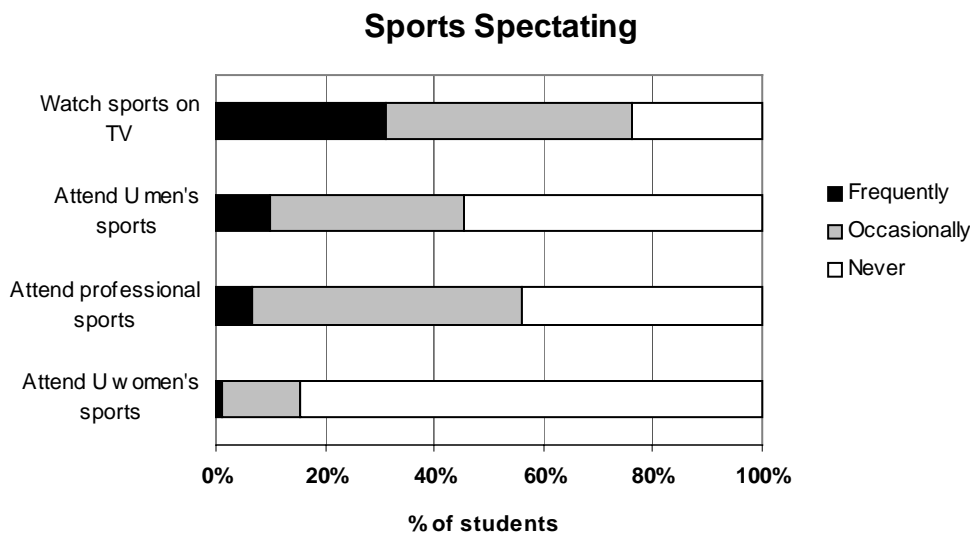


## 4.6 Sports Spectating

Attending sports events and watching sports on television has been measured in the *2001 Student Interest Survey* for a number of years. Students were asked for their general levels of frequency for attending University men's and women's sports and professional sports and watching sports on television. The results are presented in Figure 4-6.

Watching sports on television is the most common form of sports spectating by undergraduates. More than three-fourths (76.2 percent) watch sports on television at least occasionally. The percentage of students who at least occasionally attend University men's sports events is 45.6 percent, and the percentage who attend professional sports events is 56.0 percent. Only 15.4 percent attend University women's sports events.

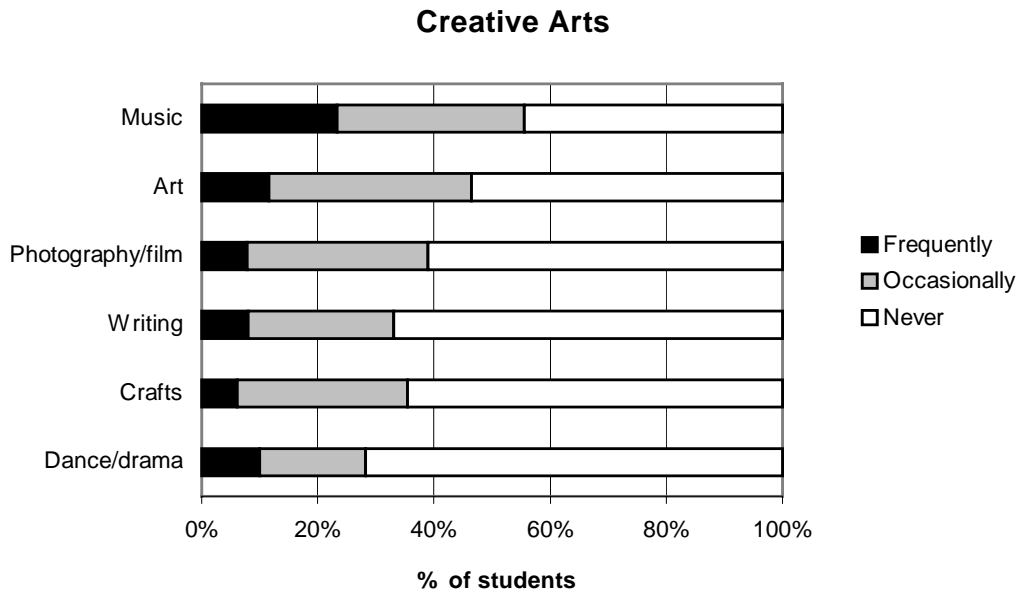
Figure 4-6



## 4.7 Creative Arts

The level of participation of students in various creative arts (see Figure 4-7, following page) is low when compared with participation in other leisure areas, with the exception of music.

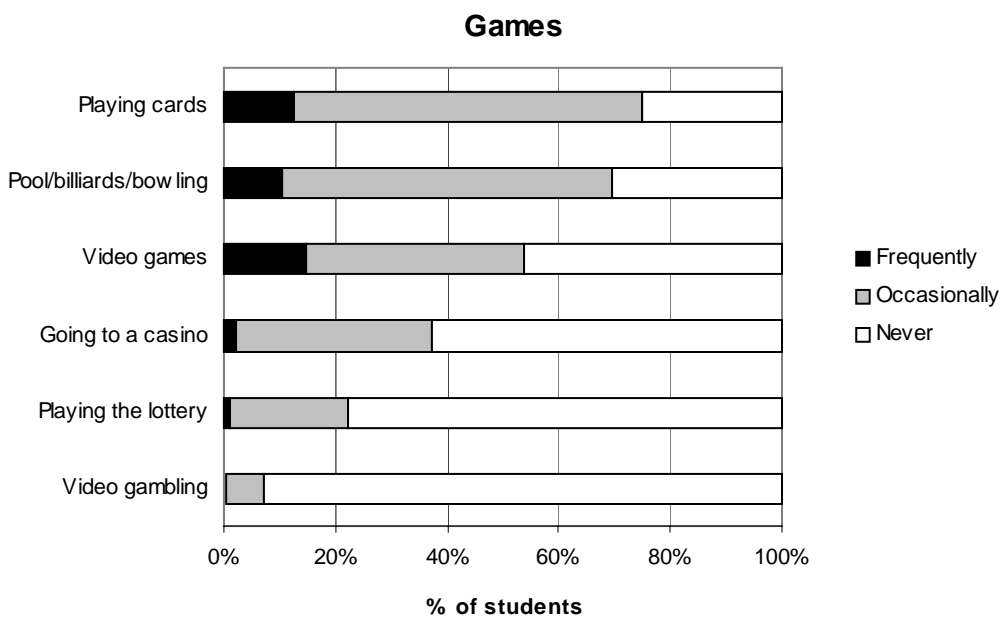
Figure 4-7



## 4.8 Games

In previous reports of the Student Interest Survey, the “games” area was not addressed. Because of the growth nationally of gambling, three related items were included in the 2001 survey: “playing the lottery,” “going to a casino,” and “video gambling.” Survey data on games is shown in Figure 4-8.

Figure 4-8



Playing cards is the most common form of games in which students engage, followed closely by pool/billiards/bowling. One in seven undergraduates frequently play video games, and over half (53.6 percent) do so at least occasionally.

Of the three forms of gambling surveyed, going to a casino is the most popular. Only 2.1 percent go to a casino frequently, however, and 37.4 percent do so at least occasionally. Only 1.2 percent play the lottery frequently, and 22.3 percent do so occasionally. Nine out of ten students (92.8 percent) never engage in video gambling.

#### 4.9 Gender and Leisure Involvement

Do differences occur with respect to participation by women and men in leisure activities? If so, are there patterns to these differences? Have changes occurred over the past 30 years in the relative participation of women and men in various activities? Primary attention will be focused on the leisure participation of women and men as examined in the 2001 survey and reported in Table 4-4 (see following page).

Table 4-4  
 Gender differences in  
 leisure participation: 2001

<b>Women participate more than men do</b>	<b>No significant difference between women and men</b>	<b>Men participate more than women do</b>
<b>Reading</b>		
Reading books	Reading newspapers Reading news magazines Reading journals in my major Reading the <i>Minnesota Daily</i> Reading tabloids	
<b>Music</b>		
Singing Listening to music on the radio	Listening to recorded music Playing a musical instrument Attending musical performances Watch music videos	
<b>Sports spectating</b>		
	Attending U women's sports	Watching sports on TV Attending U men's sports Attending pro sports
<b>Television</b>		
Talk shows Daytime soap operas Sitcoms TV dramas Reality TV shows	Daily news/weather/sports Game shows TV news magazines TV movies Rental movies	
<b>Computers</b>		
	Use e-mail Word processing World Wide Web Other internet use Online newspapers	Play games
<b>Creative arts/cultural</b>		
Art Crafts Acting/dance/drama Art exhibits/museums	Film/photography Creative writing	
<b>Community involvement</b>		
Volunteer off campus	Volunteer on campus Political activities/groups Social action groups	
<b>Games</b>		
	Cards Playing the lottery Pool/billiards/bowling Going to a casino	Video games Video gambling

In 29 activities in Table 4-4, there are no significant differences in the participation of women and men. In 13 activities, the participation of women is significantly greater than that of men. In only six activities is the participation of men significantly greater than that of women, and half of these occur in the area of sports spectating. The remaining three fall in the area of video and computer games.

In interest surveys, women have always been found to read books more frequently than men do. In the early years of the study, men tended to read newspapers more than women did; no differences presently exist between men and women in frequency of reading newspapers. In the 1991, 1996, and 2001 studies, women tended to watch talk shows on television more than men.

Involvement in the creative arts has tended to be dominated by women over the years with the exception of film and photography in which no significant differences have been observed.

Over the years of this study, men watch sports on television more frequently than women do, and men also more frequently attend University men's sports and professional sports events. There have been no gender differences in the frequency of attending University women's sports events.

The participation of women is significantly greater in five areas of television watching, including the new reality shows. Participation by women is also significantly greater in the "Creative arts/cultural" area. In some respects, one could characterize the leisure involvement of women as an interesting mix of book reading and the arts on the one hand and certain forms of television watching on the other.