

## How high school students use time: a visual essay

Mary Dorinda Allard

**H**igh school students have many demands on their time, and how they choose to spend that time on any given day depends on a variety of factors, such as the age and the sex of the student. Data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) show how much time per day, on average, high school students devote to leisure activities, household activities, work, and homework. ATUS data also reveal differences in students' use of time between weekdays and weekend days.

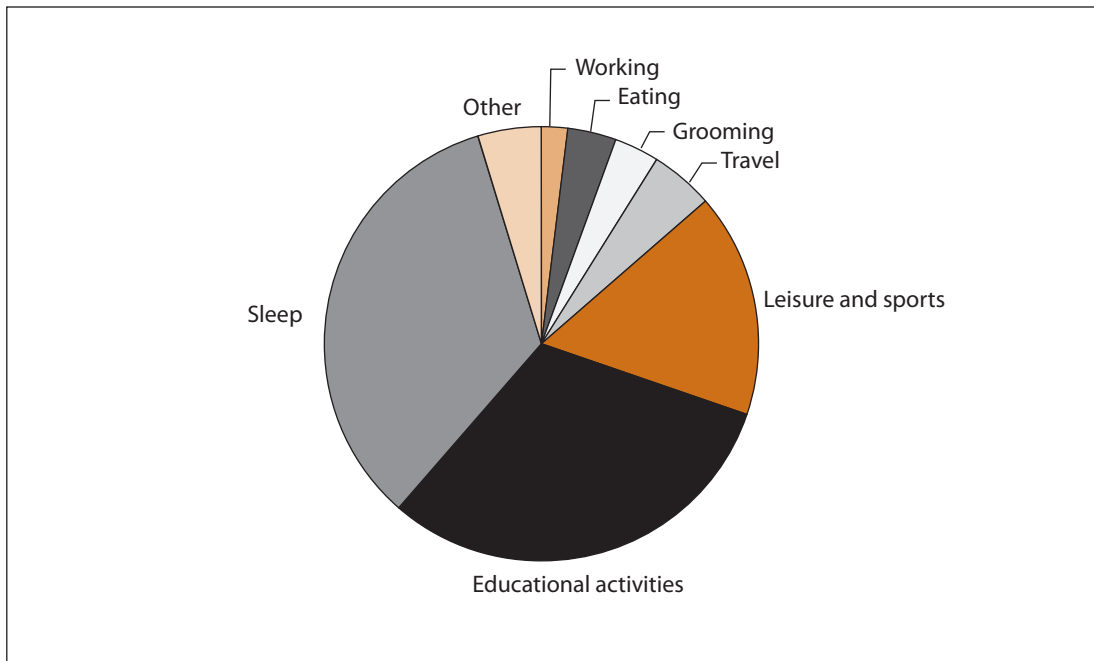
In the ATUS, which is administered to individuals age 15 and older, survey respondents are asked about the activities they performed "yesterday." The survey obtains information about respondents' pri-

mary (or main) activities. (Information about other activities they were engaged in during these primary activities is not collected.) Data were collected throughout 2003–07; however, for this essay, data are restricted to months when most high school students attend school—that is, September through May.

All data in this visual essay refer to students ages 15 to 19 who were enrolled full time in high school. While most of the data used here are for those in grades 9 through 12, a small number of eighth-grade students may be included in the estimates.

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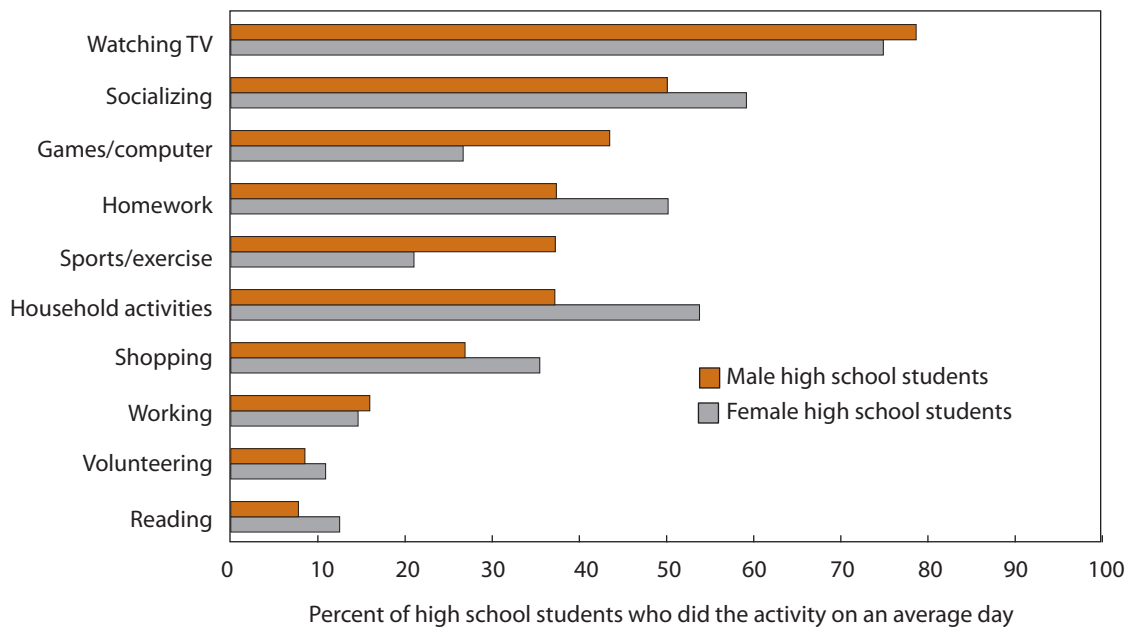
### 1. High school students divided the hours of an average schoolday among many activities



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07. Schooldays are nonholiday weekdays on which high school students ages 15 to 19 attended class.

- Together, sleeping and engaging in educational activities accounted for almost two-thirds of high school students' time on an average schoolday. On average, students slept for 8.1 hours and performed educational activities, such as attending class and doing homework, for 7.5 hours.
- Students split the remaining time among a range of activities: leisure and sports activities (4.0 hours); travel (1.1 hours); grooming (0.8 hour); eating (0.8 hour); working (0.5 hour); and other activities, such as volunteering, shopping, and doing household activities (1.2 hours).

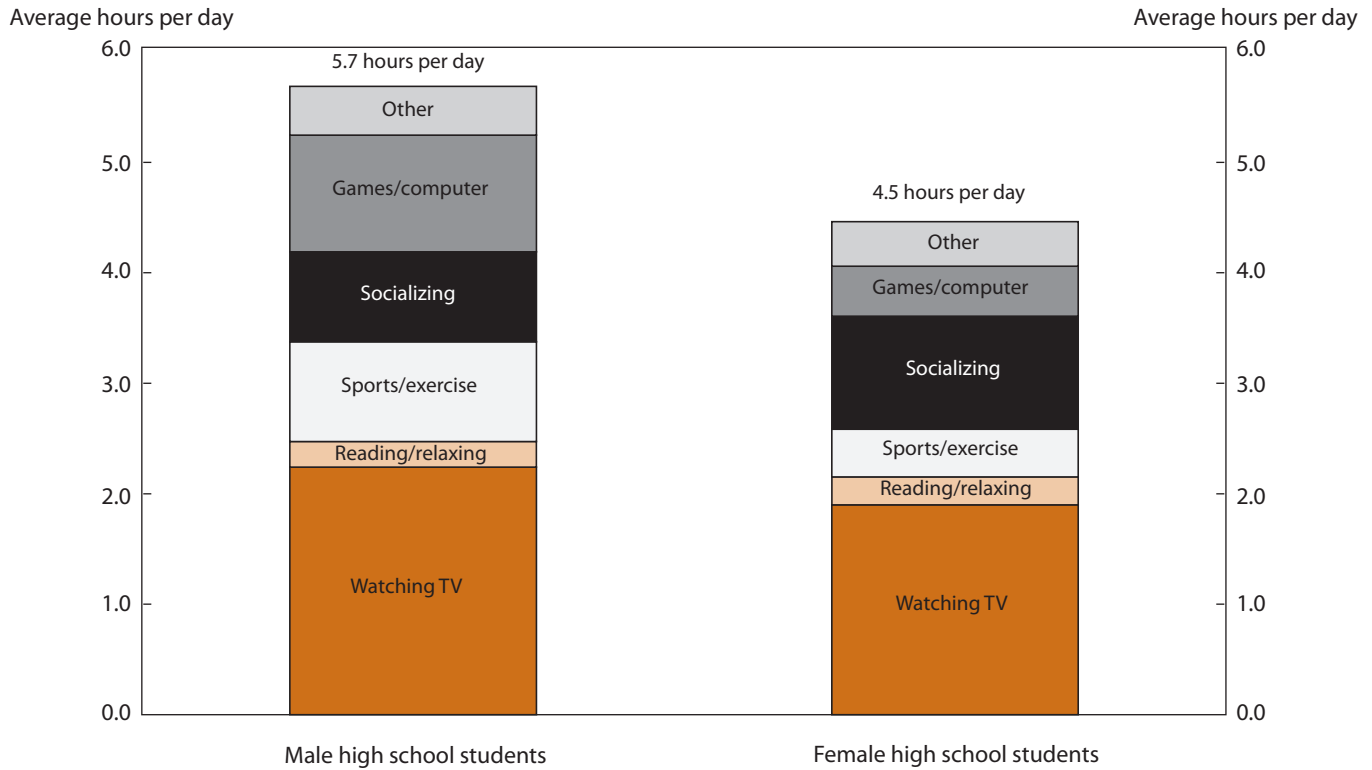
**2. Some activities were more popular among male high school students, and other activities were more popular among female high school students**



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07. Data are averages of all days of the week for high school students ages 15 to 19.

- Seventy-nine percent of male high school students watched TV on an average day, compared with 75 percent of female high school students.
- Female high school students were more likely than male high school students to do homework on an average day—50 percent of females did so, compared with 37 percent of males. Female students also were more likely than male students to do household activities (such as housework, cooking, and lawn care)—54 percent of females did so on an average day, compared with 37 percent of males.
- Male high school students were more likely than their female counterparts to engage in sports and exercise activities on an average day: 37 percent of males played sports, whereas 21 percent of females did. Forty-three percent of male students and 27 percent of female students played games and/or used a computer for leisure on an average day.

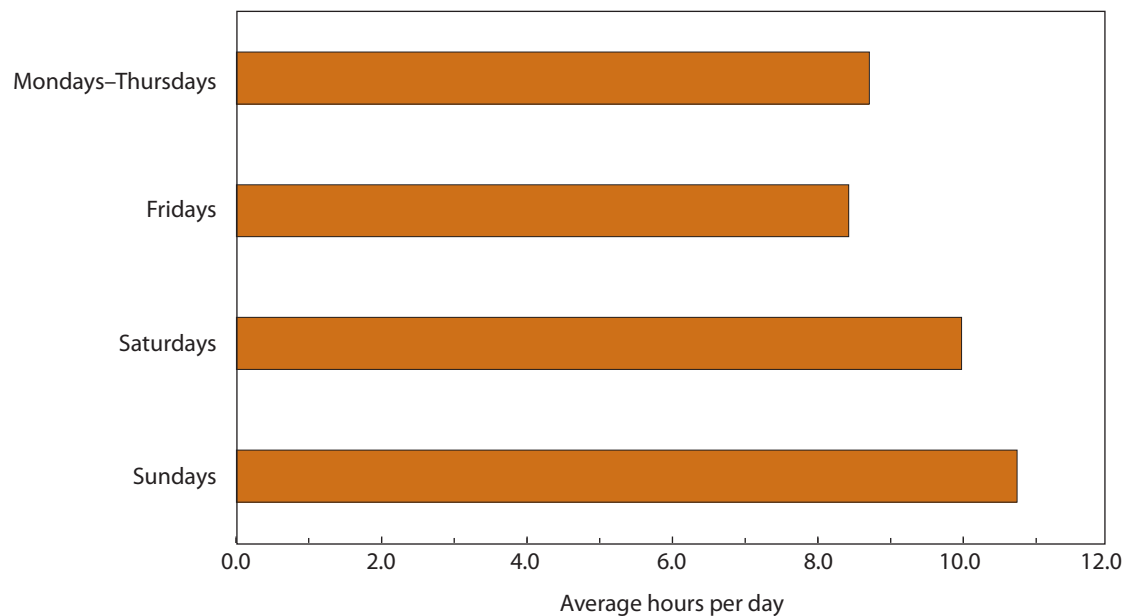
### 3. Male and female high school students spent their leisure time differently



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07. Data are averages of all days of the week for high school students ages 15 to 19.

- Male high school students spent 1.2 hours more doing leisure activities on an average day than did female high school students (5.7 hours, compared with 4.5 hours).
- Male high school students spent more time than female high school students watching TV (2.2 hours, compared with 1.9 hours), playing games and/or using a computer for leisure (1.1 hours, compared with 0.5 hour), and doing sports activities (0.9 hour, compared with 0.4 hour). Female high school students spent slightly more time socializing (1.0 hour) than did their male counterparts (0.8 hour).

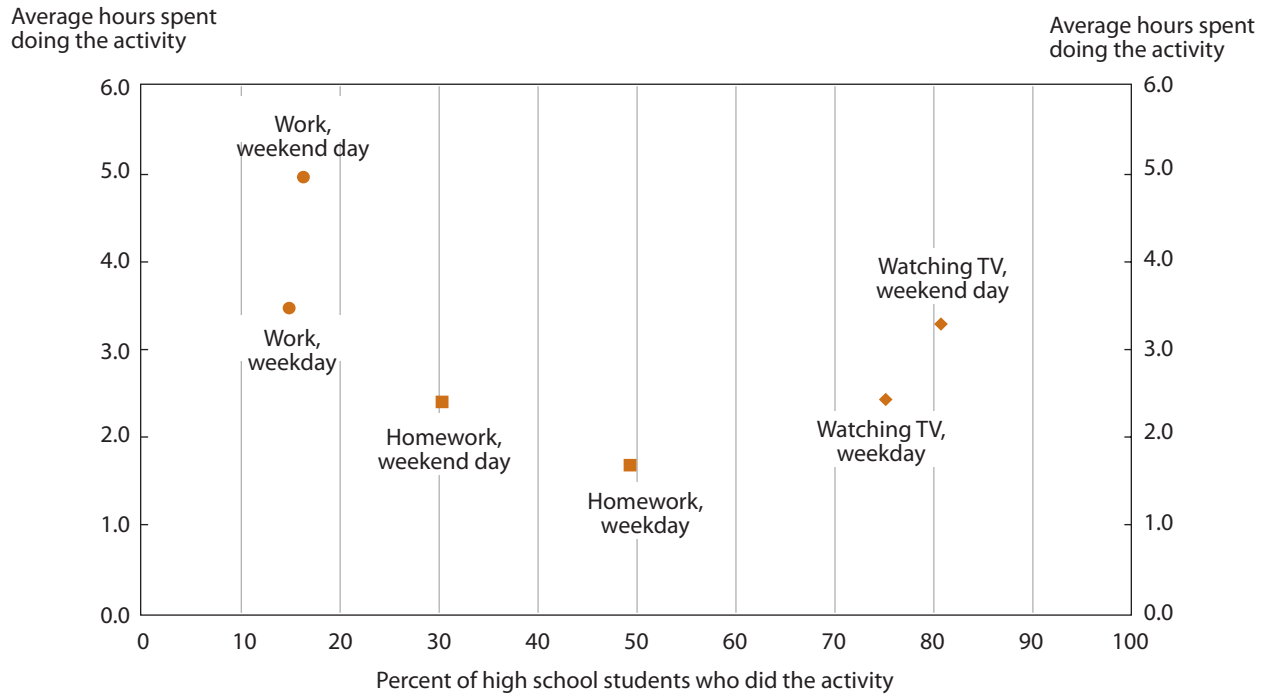
#### 4. High school students slept more on Sundays than on any other day of the week



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07. Weekday holidays are excluded. All estimates are for high school students ages 15 to 19. A day is defined as beginning at 12 a.m. and ending at 11:59 p.m.

- High school students slept more on Sundays (10.7 hours) than they did on any other day of the week, and they slept least on Fridays (8.4 hours). They slept an average of 10.0 hours on Saturdays and 8.7 hours per day Monday through Thursday.
- High school students slept later in the morning on weekend days than they did on weekdays. At 7 a.m. on weekdays, about 25 percent of high school students were asleep, compared with about 85 percent on Saturdays and Sundays.
- On average, high school students went to sleep later on Friday and Saturday nights than they did Sunday through Thursday. At 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, about 70 percent of high school students were asleep, as opposed to about 45 percent on Friday and Saturday nights.

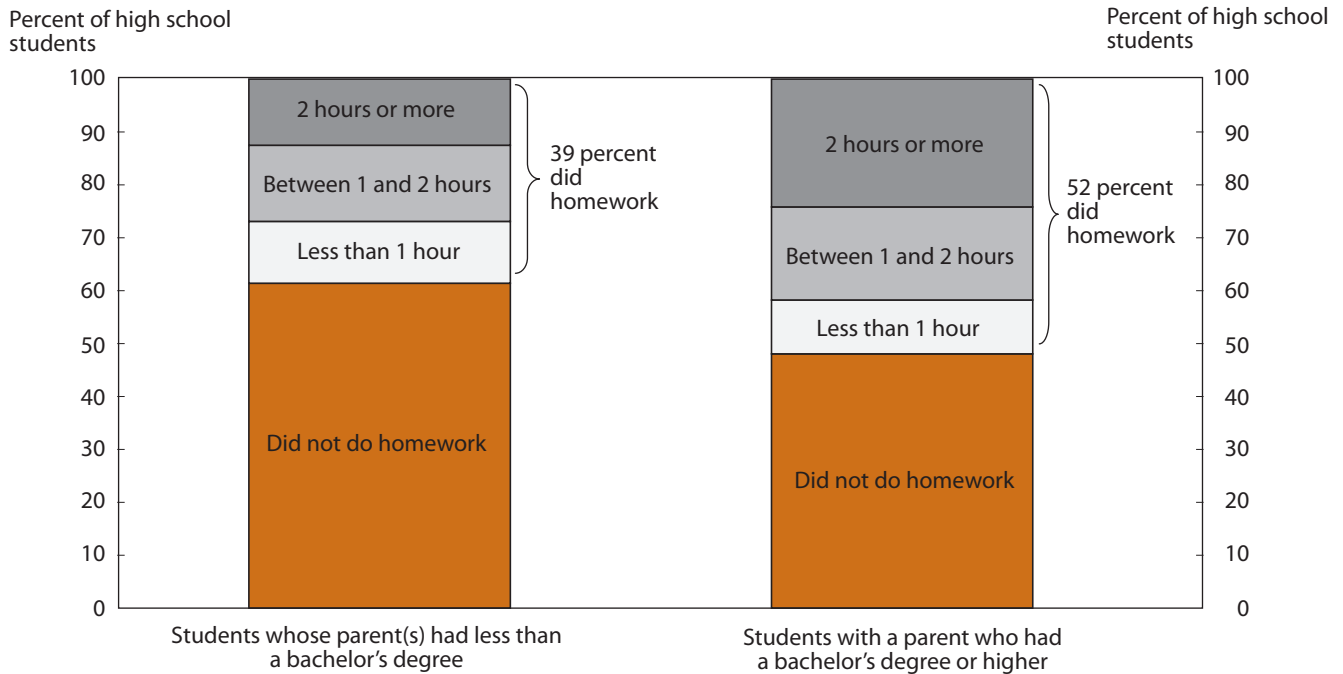
### 5. High school students spent different amounts of time doing activities on weekdays and weekend days



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07. Weekday holidays are excluded. All estimates are for high school students ages 15 to 19.

- About 15 percent of high school students worked on an average weekday and an average weekend day. On days that students worked, they spent more time doing so on weekend days than on weekdays (5.0 hours, compared with 3.5 hours).
- Forty-nine percent of high school students did homework on an average weekday, compared with 30 percent on an average weekend day. On days that students did homework, they studied for 2.4 hours on weekend days and 1.7 hours per day on weekdays.
- Seventy-five percent of high school students watched television on an average weekday, compared with 81 percent on an average weekend day. High school students who watched television did so for almost an hour longer on weekend days (3.3 hours) than they did on weekdays (2.4 hours).

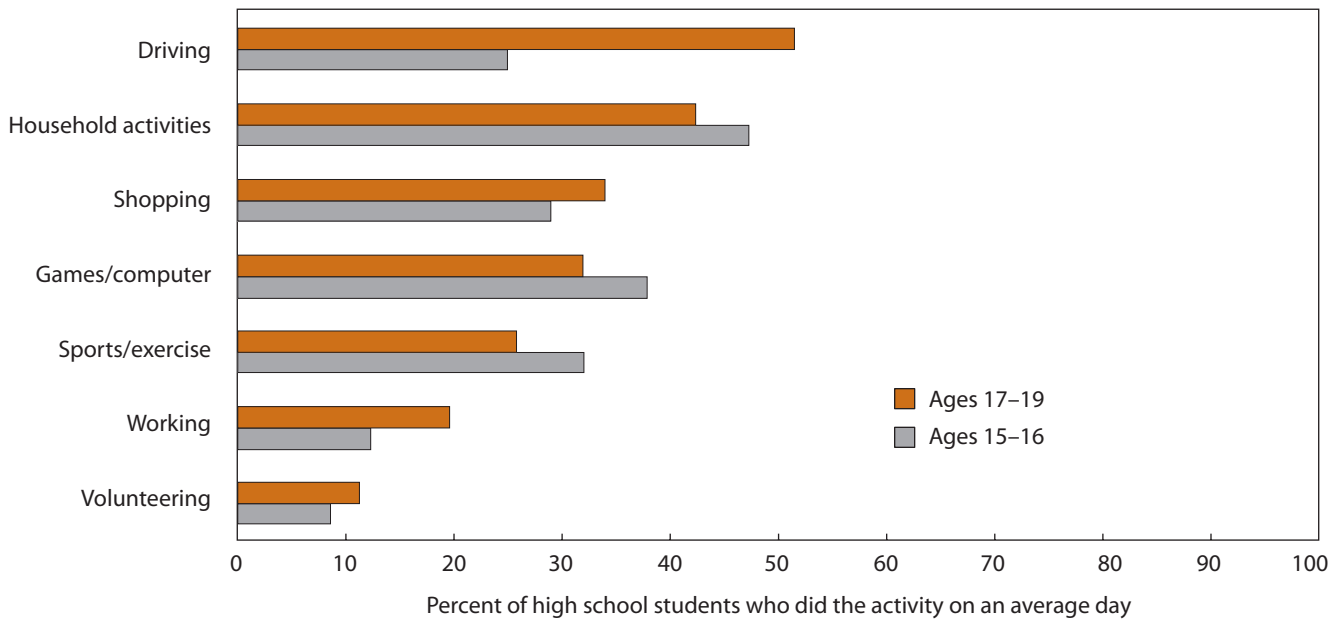
**6. High school students with a parent who had a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to do homework on an average day**



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07, and are for high school students ages 15 to 19 who lived with at least one parent. Data are averages of all days of the week. If the high school student lived with two parents, the educational attainment of parents was determined by the parent with the highest educational attainment.

- On an average day, 39 percent of high school students whose parent(s) had less than a bachelor's degree did homework, compared with 52 percent of those with a parent who had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- In addition to being more likely to do homework on an average day, high school students whose parent(s) had higher educational attainment spent more time, on average, doing homework. Twenty-four percent of students with a parent holding a bachelor's degree or higher spent 2 or more hours doing homework, compared with 13 percent of those whose parent(s) held less than a bachelor's degree.

### 7. The activities high school students did varied by age

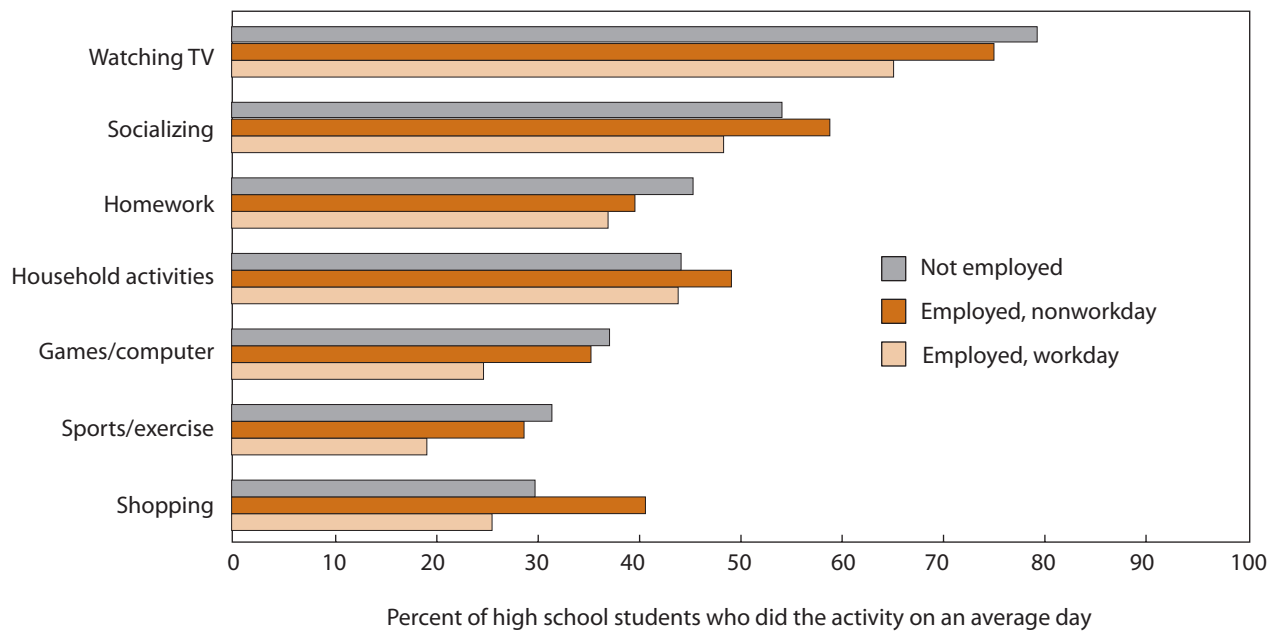


NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003-07. Estimates are averages of all days of the week for high school students ages 15 to 19.

- Fifty-one percent of high school students ages 17 to 19 drove on an average day, compared with 25 percent of students ages 15 to 16.
- Older high school students were more likely to work, shop, and do volunteer activities on an average day than were younger high school students. Among students who worked, those ages 17 to 19 worked almost an hour longer than students ages 15 to 16—4.4 hours, compared with 3.5 hours. Regardless of age, high school students who volunteered spent slightly more than 2 hours doing so, and those who shopped did so for about 1 hour.
- High school students ages 15 to 16 were more likely than those ages 17 to 19 to do household activities, play games and/or use a computer for leisure, and engage in sports and exercise activities.



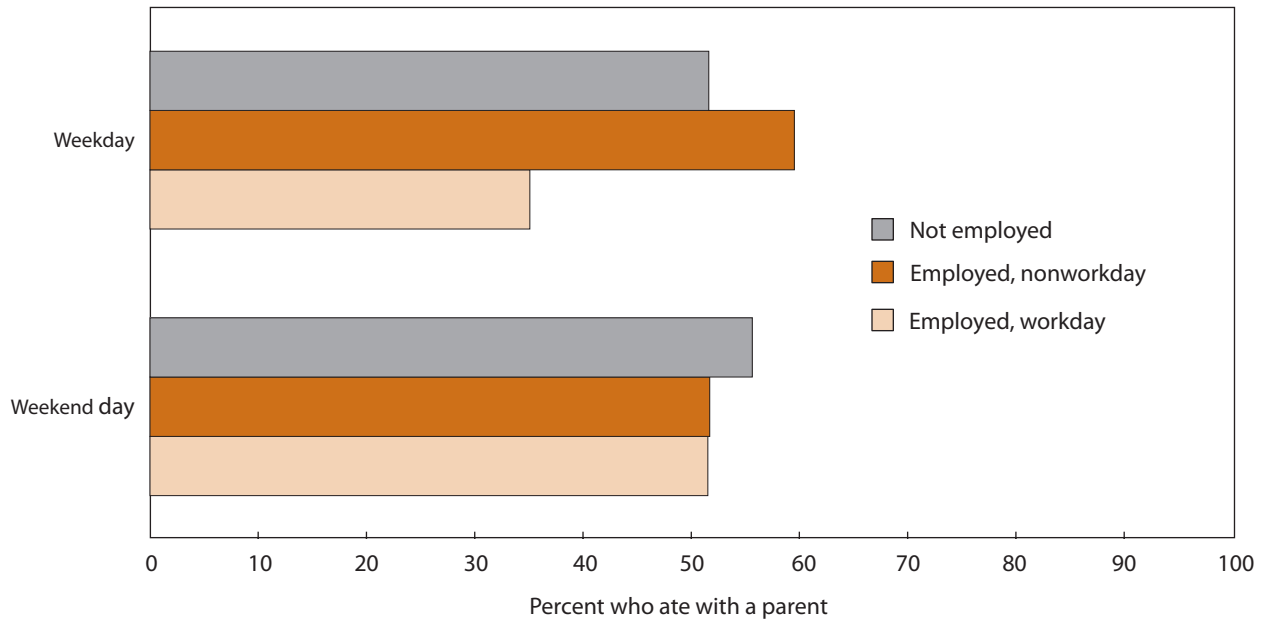
**8. There are many activities that employed high school students were less likely to do on workdays than on nonworkdays**



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07, and are for high school students ages 15 to 19. Workdays are days on which high school students did some paid work or income-generating activity, such as babysitting.

- Sixty-five percent of employed students watched TV on days that they worked. By contrast, 80 percent of students without a job watched TV on an average day. Among those who watched TV, employed students spent about an hour less doing so on workdays than did students without a job (1.9 hours, compared with 2.8 hours).
- On nonworkdays, 29 percent of employed high school students participated in sports activities. However, on workdays, only 19 percent of employed students played sports.
- Forty-six percent of high school students who were not employed did homework on an average day, compared with about 40 percent of those who were employed. Employed high school students were about as likely to do homework on workdays as on nonworkdays.
- Forty-one percent of employed high school students shopped on nonworkdays, whereas 26 percent shopped on workdays. Thirty percent of students who were not employed shopped on an average day.

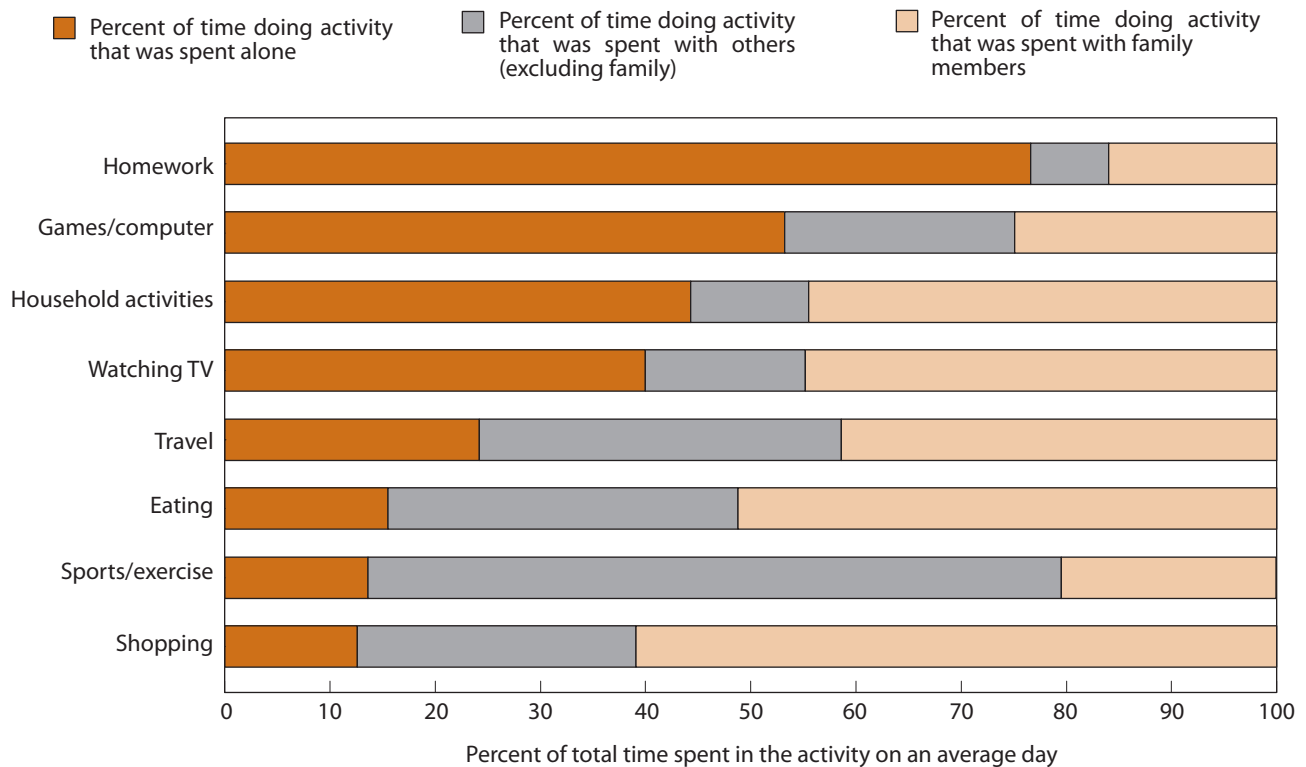
### 9. Employed high school students were less likely to eat with one or more parents on weekday workdays



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07, and are for high school students ages 15 to 19. Weekday holidays are excluded. Workdays are those on which high school students did some paid work or income-generating activity, such as babysitting.

- Employed high school students were less likely to eat with a parent sometime during the day on weekdays they worked than on weekdays they did not work. (Thirty-five percent of employed high school students ate with a parent on an average weekday on which the students worked, compared with 60 percent on a weekday they did not work.) By contrast, 52 percent of those who were not employed ate with a parent on an average weekday.
- On an average weekend day, more than 50 percent of high school students ate with a parent, regardless of the student's employment status.

## 10. The company that high school students kept varied by activity



NOTE: Estimates are for September through May, 2003–07. Estimates are averages of all days of the week for high school students ages 15 to 19. Percent spent with “others” includes time spent with friends, neighbors/acquaintances, and other household and non-household members.

- Shopping was the activity that high school students were most likely to do with family members. Of the time that high school students spent shopping, they spent about 61 percent with family members; 26 percent of the time, they were with others. Only 13 percent of students’ shopping time was spent alone.
- High school students typically ate with others as well. Students were alone only 15 percent of the time they spent eating.
- Homework was typically done alone. High school students spent 77 percent of homework time alone; about 16 percent of homework time was spent with family members.